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NORTH AFRICA AND THE DESERT

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SCENES AND MOODS

BY

GEORGE E. WOODBERRY

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1914

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To

SETH LOW

LONG MY FRIEND AND ONCE MY CHIEF

A STATESMAN INTERESTED

IN ALL THAT PERTAINS TO HUMAN WELFARE

I DEDICATE

CONFIDENT OF HIS SYMPATHY

THIS BOOK OF THE ARAB WORLD

CONTENTS

		PAGE
I.	Tunisian Days	1
II.	Tlemcen	51
III.	Figuig	103
IV.	Tougourt	147
V.	Scenes and Visions	195
VI.	On the Mat	245
VII.	Djerba	287
VIII.	Tripoli	313

TUNISIAN DAYS

I

TUNISIAN DAYS

I

I WAS fortunate in my first landfall at Tunis. It was a fine sea picture framed in that chill November dawn. On my left, over the rippling watery gold to the few pink clouds eastward, lay the great blue mountain headland, stretching far behind. In front, a little to the right, was Goletta, the port, hard by; and ranging off northward the line of the ocean beach ran stern and solemn, with the lighthouse above. That rise, there, was the hill of Carthage. Westward over the hollow space of waters swept the crescent horizon inland, low and misty, centred a little to the south by the obscure white of far Tunis. Carthage is the first thought of the traveller; his instant memory is of Phœnician ships, and his imagination is of Scipio and Regulus — these are the sights they saw.

The steamer plied up the long canal that makes the shallow, broad lake navigable to the docks some miles beyond; flamingoes flew to the right and left over the level lapping waters, fresh in the raw, damp, almost rainy air; and gradually Tunis drew in sight, like a great white flower on the bosom of the sloping uplands, strange, solitary, unexpected, with minarets and the island look of a Moslem city.

II

Barren enough was my first acquaintance with the land side, weary, cheerless, desolate, like windy prairies in autumn, uninhabited, uninhabitable; and I was chilled to the bone when I came back to the hotel, then in the bud of its first season. It is more sober now, but then it had a near cousinship to Monte Carlo; it was delightfully irresponsible, vivacious, gay. One passed to the picturesque bar and the café, thick with interesting groups; or with equal ease to the "little horses" with their ever-dissolving banks of faces, a covey of all nations, round the bell-timed play, and to the vaudeville stage with gymnasts, French acting, fat Jewess dancers, and a world lightly enjoying itself, as it looked from railed low boxes on the spacious floor

— men, women, children, with tables, glasses, straws, and bright-colored things to drink, waiters, musicians — always a pretty scene, with incidents, and rich in human relations; or one went more gravely by a stairway to the privacy of baccarat in its upper seclusion of the visiting card. It was a pleasant and polite place wherever one might stroll about, and in every corridor and at all hours the grand toilette of capitals, men and women — even adventurers — of the world. The old beylic of Tunis seemed far away; at least, one was still in Christendom.

I stepped out on the sidewalk after dinner, on a broad avenue with trees. At the brilliant crossing carriages were passing with drawn screens; and, as they drove slowly by, fingers held back the curtains, and from time to time glimpses of women's figures were disclosed of quite a different type from any within doors — ladies of wealthy native families taking the air, and curious to see the French streets by night. So I learned that it was the eve of Leilet-el-Kadir, the twenty-sixth of Ramadan, the night of power commemorating the descent of the Koran on earth, a grand Mohammedan feast; and I went forthwith into old Tunis on my first voyage of discovery. Festivity reigned. On

every hand were lights of all varieties; the minarets aloft were outlined with them; in the narrow streets they were as the multitude of the stars for number, colored and clustered, hung and looped and festooned, flaring and lanterned, a fine illumination in the obscurity; and under them an animated throng of all ages, beautifully dressed for the occasion — a city, a race, and a faith *en fête*.

I sat down at last in the café-crowded Place Halfouine, one of the principal open spaces or squares of the old city, not large, and surrounded by low, rather mean, buildings. It was a night-scene, closed in by shadows, the foreground brightened by irregularly placed open cafés with tables outside and benches within, all completely filled with men, drinking, smoking, playing at simple games, quite orderly, without boisterous noise or muscular disorder, or joking — admirable public behavior. It charmed by its novelty — costumes and persons, mass without individuality — the scene of a new land. What folly to think that there are no more worlds to discover! The scene was to me as if no one had ever looked on it before. I observed the faces, the attitudes, the doings of this strange people as if I had just landed from another world; and I would gladly have stayed longer,

but, with the early closing habits of Moslems, the square began to thin, and I went with the rest through the fast-emptying street with a glad feeling that in a world, now grown altogether too small and neighborly, I had happened upon one last true relic of the "far away."

It was four days later, however, that the true holiday came, the feast of rejoicing after Ramadan is over — Little Bairam. It is celebrated at Tunis with special zeal. The morning streets were overflowing with men and children in their best apparel; but the latter, in particular, beautifully attired. Such gold jackets, such tiny burnooses, such scarlet and crimson, turquoise and emerald — and pinks! Such chubby fat faces in their barbaric borders of clothes — or delicate, refined features, stamped with race, set off by their greens and blues! Such vivacity, too; pure childish fun and pleasure in a national holiday! There were strings of open carts of the rudest construction — like tip-carts for gravel — completely filled with these children heaped up like nosegays, their brilliancy of color set off by the rudeness of the common cart. This seemed one of their principal pleasures — taking a ride. But there were others. In a packed cross-street I was addressed by two

gallant lads of perhaps fifteen, who were selling tickets at an entrance; with faces and figures full of hospitable welcome to the stranger, they invited me in, and I went. Inside was a small, barn-like theatre with a curtain, a stage and an audience; and there I saw "the shadows," pictures thrown upon a screen, and the histrionic art was thus practised with lifelike effect. I had read of "the shadows," but I never expected to see them. I came out after a while, and the boys saluted me with very cheerful and animated smiles as I passed them. I spied another show a little farther on; and this, undaunted by my former experience, I also entered. It was the puppets — also a traveller's treasure-trove — the French gendarme was the universal and unpitied victim, and the plots were realistic incidents from things as they are. The audience was almost wholly of children, from six years or less to twelve or more, many of them with nurses or attendants; they took an active and even excited interest, and did the necessary reckonings and sums which the transactions on the stage called for, and shouted out the answers as at a school exhibition, it might be, though the transactions in question were not of a sort ever shown at an American school, and would have evoked much remon-

strance; but the children were very happy through it all, thoroughly enjoyed it, in fact. I went behind the curtain and saw the puppets engineered; and I left the little theatregoers with fresh ideas of juvenile amusements.

So all the morning I passed among the gayly decked crowd, with one and another small adventure, always handsomely treated, aided, saluted. A people of kind and gentle manners, old and young; and I am glad that I first saw them so fortunately in their days of pleasantry and taking pride in their own. The experience threw an atmosphere of cheerfulness over the land and the people, and softened many a darker scene of their common days, of their penury and hardship — their load of life. I could always think, even when all was at its worst, that they still "had seasons that only bade live and rejoice," when many went bravely clad and fed full, and the whole city was vivid with a spirit of general joy. The fixed expression of the crowd was one of resigned patience under habitual control; the gayety, the happiness, the holiday were relieved on a grave background — a temperament, a character, an essential living, unknown to me, something secret, profound. It was my first true contact with Islam. One

way, at least, by which a religion may properly be measured is by its efficient power on those who profess it; certainly the Moslem faith is very effective on its believers; the sincerity of that faith is the first thing one learns about it in practical observation. How often since then have I gathered with them at this and other fêtes, and seen the carpeted streets and tapestried walls, the solemn processions, the robes of state, the fine horses, the men and the arms, all the barbaric display; illuminations, fireworks, parades; but I have never been so struck, as in these first Tunisian days, with the spirit of gentle happiness that made my earliest impression of the race as I met it on the shore of the sea.

III

Ranging through the country by rail, I found one of the oldest lands of earth wearing the signs, familiar to my eyes years ago, of the American West. It seemed, at times, like an hallucination of memory with odd differences, such as one might have in a dream. Now and then one came to a larger and well-gardened station, some watering-place of the richer citizens in summer; or to a thriving seaport; but,

in general, the stops were at way stations, as in all thinly populated districts — a simple crossing of the long gray roads, with a few buildings for the business of the line, vast spaces round about, possibly slightly improved, with fields or orchards or little groves, a crowd of loafers hanging on the gates or fence of the enclosure to whom the arrival of the train was the day's event, a farm wagon of modern make, with horses, awaiting some expected passenger and driving off to some home lost in the expanse; in a word, the impression was of colonial things, of the opening up of a country, of reclaiming the soil. What one really saw everywhere was a frontier.

In the newspapers there was the same absorbing theme — colonization; the local news, the daily happenings were characteristic of an agricultural, industrial, commercial life of the nature of an invasion of the waste. Here large depots for machinery were rising; there men of broad enterprise, or syndicate companies had planted olives, or corn, or vines, on a vast scale over miles of territory; further on, a new line was making accessible the phosphate wealth of Gafsa. Modern civilization, mechanism, communication, organized exploitation, penetrating a new country, was what one felt, as if that

region were truly new like a savage land. Yet how many times civilization, in one or another form, has rolled over it! In reality, it is one of the most ancient beds of the human torrent, bare and forsaken as it looks now. And now it is again a new frontier — the place of the invasion of a new era by a new race with new designs.

This impression, nevertheless, is mainly a thing of the mind, of recollection and observation; to the eye it is not so noticeable, such is the extent of the natural spaces, the contour and atmosphere of things held in these far horizons, the new temperament of that landscape, and so characteristically native still is the aspect of indigenous human life not yet displaced. The earth has the look of the wild. Whatever may have formerly been its culture and occupancy, all had lapsed back to the primitive; a land of plains — melancholy tracts under a gray sky or vast empty spaces under a brilliant sun — edged in far distance by lone mountains, caressed on broken shores by a barren sea; full of solitude, sadness. Here and there some great ruin stood, not unlike Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain, or even cities of ruins; the land is strewn with them — temples, courts, baths, cisterns, floors, columns, reliefs, arches of triumph, theatres;

but they seldom count to the eye. Antiquity, like the frontier, is also a thing of the mind, in the main; the past and the future are both matter of reflection, in the background of memory and knowledge it may be, but not noticeable in the general landscape. It is a place where human fate seems transitory, an insignificant detail, as on the sea — or like animal life in nature, indifferent.

IV

Once on such an excursion on the eastern seacoast, the Tunisian Sahel, I left Sousse behind in the noon glare, a busy, thriving, pleasant place, swarming with Arab life in its well-worn ancestral ways and with French enterprise in its pioneering glow. The old Saracen wall lay behind me towered and gated, a true mediæval girdle of defence, and I gazed back on the white city impearling its high hillside in the right Moslem way, and then settled myself to the long ride southward as I passed through cemeteries, crisscrossed with Barbary fig, and by gardens adjoining the sea, and struck out into the plain, spotted with salty tracts and little cultivated. It is thus that a ride on this soil is apt to begin — with a cemetery; it is often

the master note that gives the mood to a subsequent landscape, a mood of sadness that is felt to be sterile also, impregnated with fatalism. A Moslem burying-ground may be, at rare places, a garden of repose; a forsaken garden it is usually, even when most dignified and beautiful with its turbaned pillars in the thick cypresses; but it is always a complete expression of death. The cemetery lies outside at the most used entrance of a town; and, as a rule, in the country it is of a melancholy indescribable — it lies there in so naked a fashion, a hopeless and huddled stretch of withered earth in swells and hummocks, hardly distinguishable from common dirt and débris — the eternal potter's field. It is a fixed feature in the Tunisian landscape, which is made of simple elements, whose continuous repetition gives its monotony to the land. A ride only rearranges these elements under new lights and in new horizons.

Here the great plain was the common background; my course to Sfax lay over it, broken at first by a blossoming of gardens round a town or village, and twice I came out on the sea; but always the course was over a plain with elemental mark and quality — with an omnipresence as of the sea on a voyage. The line between man's domain and nature is as

sharply drawn on this plain as on a beach; where man has not labored the scene stretches out with nature in full possession, as on the ocean; his habitations and territory are islands. Everything is seen relieved on great spaces, individualized, isolated; fields of grain, green and moving under a strong land wind; or olive groves — silvery gleams — on the hillsides, clumps of trees, or long lines of them, whole hillsides, it may be; or there are gardens, closed, secluded, thickly planted with pear or peach or fig or other fruit, with vegetables, perhaps, beneath and palms above. The figure scenes, too, are of the same recurring simplicity — a man leading a spirited horse in the street, a camel meagre and solemn and solitary silhouetting the sky anywhere within a range of miles, boys in couples herding sheep in the middle distances. The town or village emerging at long intervals is a monochord — a point of dazzling white far off, dissolving on approach into low houses, a confused mass of uneven roofs skirting the ground except where the minaret and the palm rise and unite it to heaven — to the fire-veined evening sky, deep and tranquil, or the intense blue noon, or the pink morning bloom of the spiritualized scene of the dawn. The streets are silent; by the

Moorish café lie or sit or crouch motionless figures, sometimes utterly dull, like logs on the earth, or else holding pipes or gazing at checkers, or vacant — always somnolent, statuesque, sedentary. There are no windows, no neighborhood atmosphere — only a stagnant exterior. The feeling of a retreat, of repose, of being far away is always there. These towns have a curious mixture of the eternal and the ruined in their first aspect; as of things left by the tide, derelicts of life all. A ride in the Sahel is a slow, kaleidoscopic combination of these things, a reiteration without new meaning — the town, the cemetery, the grove, the garden, the plain, the fields, camels and sheep, and herdboys — horizons, somnolence, tranquillity. What a ride! and then to come out on the sea at Monastir and Mahdia — such a homeless sea! There may be boats with bending sails, the fisher's life, suggesting those strange outlying islands they touch at, exile islands from long ago, where Marius found hiding, and where the Roman women of pleasure of the grand world were sent to live and die, out of the world — still the home of a race, blending every strain of ancient blood. Mahdia, once an Arab capital and long a seat of power in different ages, is a famous battle name in Mohammedan and cru-

sading and corsair annals; it stood many a great siege on its rocky peninsula, in Norman and other soldiering hands, however lifeless it may seem now; but as one looks on its diminutive harbor, a basin hewn in the rock, it seems now to speak rather of the enmity of the sea and the terror of tempest on this dangerous coast — shallow waters and inhospitable shores. History, human courage, was but a wave that broke over it, and is gone like the others, a momentary foam; but the sea is always the sea. Everywhere one must grow familiar with the neighboring coast-line before the sea will lay off that look of enmity it wears to all at the first gaze; it is foreign always by nature. To descend here at Mahdia, and to walk by its waves, to hear its roll, to look off to its gulfs and hilltops afar, however brilliant may be the scene, is to invite the deepest melancholy that the waste sea holds — so meaningless that world lies in its monotony all about. I remembered the Moorish prince who here, after his long victories, stood reflecting on the men who were great before him, and how their glory was gone. It is a more desolate port now. One gladly turns to the land — and there meets the plain, equally vaguely hostile.

So I rode on by the unceasing stretch of

the way, through town and by garden and grove, into the ever-enveloping plain that opened before. It was like putting to sea at every fresh start; and late in the afternoon, on the last far crest of the rolling plain, I saw the great ruin, El Djem, that rose with immense commanding power and seemed to dominate a world of its own sterile territory. It is a great ruin — a colosseum; arches still in heaven, and piled and fallen rocks of the old colossal cirque; it still keeps its massive and uplifted majesty, its Roman character of the eternal city cast down in the waste, its monumental splendor — a hoar and solemn token of the time when there were inhabitants in this desolation to fill the vast theatre on days of festival, and the line of its subject highway stretched unbroken to Tunis and southward, a proud, unending urban way of villas, a road of gardens, where now only stagnates the salty plain, sterile, lifeless. The hamlet beside it is hardly perceptible, like a mole-hill, a mere trace of human life. I sat out the sunset; and after, under a cold, starry sky, Orion resplendent in the west and the evening star a glory, I set off again by the long road through the sparkling April darkness and a wind that grew winter-cold with night, southward still — the vast heavens broken forth with

innumerable starry lights — till after some hours of speeding on a route that was without a living soul, I came again on belated groups of walking Bedouins and fragrant miles of gardens dark by the roadway and many a thick olive grove, and drew up at Sfax.

V

Sfax is the southern capital of Tunisia. It has always been an important site, and under the new rule of the French thrives and prospers commercially, in true frontier fashion, as the chief market and base of the country being opened up in the inland behind it whose seaport it is. It is also an old Mohammedan stronghold, and its inherited life and customs go on, as at Sousse, in the immemorial Arab ways. I remember it as the city of the olive and the sponge. In the early morning light the open spaces about the market were littered with young boys at their open-air breakfast, which may be seen at most Mediterranean seaports on the Moslem side — the vender beside his cooking apparatus, the boys with saucers of soup or sops of bread, and on all sides the beginnings of labor; but all this meagre human life was framed in an exquisite marine view

beyond. The wharf was thickly lined with the strange-looking boats of the sponge-fishers, their Greek flags at half-mast in honor of Good Friday, their sailors in Albanian costumes, their gear heaping the open spaces with ropes and nets and endless tackle. It was all charming, one of the vignettes of travel that will haunt the memory for years — the odors, the little tasks, the look of the toil of the sea, the sponges in dark heaps, the blue, limpid morning air crossed with strange spars and ropes, and the host of fluttering flags.

Later in the day I got its companion scene from a hilltop some miles south of the city, whence one commands a view of olive orchards sloping down in one vast grove, in lines of regular intervals, as far as the eye can reach, and lost to sight on all sides with nothing to break the expanse — only millions of olive-trees regularly planted, filling the entire broad, circling landscape. A little tower surmounts the hilltop and from its round apex one surveys the whole; the sense of this dot-like centre enhances the impression that the scene makes of a living weft of mathematical lines, like an endless spider's web. It is a unique sight. The geometrical effect is curious, like an immense garden-diagram; the similarity of the round,

bullet-like heads of the trees, all alike in shape, is a novel trait of monotony; the silver-gray of the foliage, mixed with the reddish tones of the soil, gives, in so broad a view, a ground earth color quite new to the eye; and the sense of multitude in which, nevertheless, individuality remains persistent and acutely distinct on so vast a scale makes an indelible impression.

VI

I SEEK in vain the secret of the charm that Tunis lays upon me. Coming back to it, one feels something intimate in the city, such as there is in places long lived in and cherished, impregnated with memories, subtilized by forgotten life and feeling. It has sunk deeper into the senses, the affections. Can the charm be merely its soothing air, its weather, which, after all, is our physical element? It has a marvellous sky; all hues that are celestial and live in heaven are there. What clarity! Its changeable blues excite and call the eye from hour to hour; and on rainy days its grays are soft, enveloping mantles for the sight. Its peculiar trait is a greenish tint in the blue, pervasive but not defined, an infusion of clear emerald, translucent, such as one sees in winter

sunsets in New England; but here in early summer you will distinguish it at high noon, after the rainless days of late spring. Tradition associates heat with this coast, as with the Mediterranean generally; but that is an illusion of the foreigner. Tunis is often chilly, bitterly cold at times, though without the fall of snow; it lies under the heights of the Atlas, and the winds bring down the snow-chill on their wings. I remember one February when there were no trains from Algiers for five days, the snow blocking the road; it lay, at some places on the line, nine feet deep. But whatever may be the weather, the atmospheric charm remains; it is soothing, and has narcotic quality.

A fine landscape in fine weather is always captivating and assimilates the traveller to the land. One is always at home in the sun; and a noble view finds a friend in every eye. One or two such experiences will make the fortune of a whole journey and after a while be its whole memory. But in some regions, some cities, the spell is perpetual; it is so at Tunis. The prospect is broad, and wherever one turns the eye wanders off delightfully. The most complete view is from the western hill, where is a beautiful great park of rolling land with woods whence you will see the white city south-

ward; it lies like a great lily on its pads of green background, with its motionless blue waters round about — a lake-country scene; level waters like a flood, all floored and streaked with purple and blue bands and reaches — a water prairie — to where Carthage gleams white on its own green hill, amid an horizon of snowy villages dazzling in the sun; and between, nearer, isolated roofs that flash emerging from their obscure green gardens and tree-clumps, here and there; farther still to the southeast, as the eye travels out over the long lake into the gulf and the sea, rises a mass of mountain blues that bound the entrance to the land and its harbors. It is a view fit for a Greek amphitheatre.

Wherever you go, you are always coming out on these massive, spacious, beautifully colored prospects, white strips of city or village amid the spring, set in the master tone of blue that envelopes and combines them — sky, and lake, and sea, themselves infinitely changeable with the light and the distance and the hour. Even in the most unexpected places Heaven will open these far-off ways over a new land. I remember going into an obscure and blind street, in the Arab quarter, among buildings in all stages of apparent decay. I lifted the knocker at the lovely, nail-studded door of an ancient-

looking house, and passed at once into an inner court with a fountain, beautifully decorated, cool, shadowy, exquisite in repose and the sense of luxury; and I was led on through a maze of stairways and passages till I came out on a large room below the roof with a balcony; and stepping forward, I saw unrolled as if by enchantment the whole sea-view. There must be many such commanding points of vantage in the houses on the crest of the thickly built hill — old Tunis, where the Arabs live. From this station I overlooked the lower city with all its roofs and streets. The multitude of green-tiled roofs on different levels made the color-ground, whence rose the numerous low, white domes, the slender minarets also touched with green or tipped with golden balls, the greater domes of the mosques, the mass of the citadel; broad French faubourgs and avenues were enclosing and defining lines, with irregular masses of foliage, and deep, narrow streets sank in the near scene, full of their native life. It was an architectural wilderness of form and color, arresting, vivifying, oriental in mass, feeling and detail, with the suggestion of a dream, of evanescence, and round it was poured on all sides the still blue element — sky, ocean, air. In Tunis, I noticed, everything seemed to end

thus, in something beyond, in a mood; life constantly distilled its dream, and it was a dream of the senses.

The senses are constantly appealed to; they are kept awake, alert, attentive, and they are fed; they have their joys. We do not habitually use our senses for joy; and this is a part of the spell of Tunis, that there, under a Southern sky, the senses come into their own again. It is not merely the instinct of curiosity that is kept active by an *ensemble* so variously novel and insistent — for example, these pavilioned minarets, square with a cube above, ending in a green pyramid, or else octagonal in shape with the gallery and its awning, tipped by the three gold balls and crescent — haunting one like a strange sky; or the same instinct crudely excited by the *ensemble* of a population so foreign in physiognomy, garb, and physical behavior as the Arab in its multifarious aspects, its color and movement, all the unaccustomed surface of life. A street in old Tunis is truly seen only when there is no one in it; it is then that it is most impressive and yields up its spirit. What privacy! those blank walls! those rare high windows beautifully set! those discreet hanging balconies of latticed wood and iron! those nail-studded doors in exquisite patterns, that

seem to have been rarely opened! An old house, set in some deep forest, is not more retired. And, if one passes within — silence, and soft footfalls, and refinement of all sense-impressions, the constant presence of delicately moulded handiwork, tiles cooling to the eye, wrought stucco, carved wood; and in those interiors, with their beautiful ceilings and wainscoting, are columns that seem of pagan purity, fountains as of woodland solitude, courts of garden peace. It is wonderful, how this effect of harborage and seclusion has been attained by an art so simple — flowers, water, plaster, wood, traceries, colored tiles. The city must be full of beautiful objects of this old art. It is not in this or that house only, nor in the public museums where rare examples are collected and massed, that one feels this artistic quality in the old race. It is felt in the handicrafts everywhere, the decoration of the surfaces, the enamelling, the gilding, the effort and liking for what is wrought in lovely patterns and relieved work of every description. There is a detail in the Tunisian sense of beauty, an omnipresent and conscious decorative spirit, something native and human. It is not only in the palace, but in the street, as one treads the narrow ways, and looks into the bright shops,

and loiters in strange corners. It is an art of the senses — decoration is most obviously that. Rooted in barbaric taste? possibly; but most things human are rooted in barbarism. Unintellectual? perhaps, in the European sense. Unemotional? certainly not on the European scale of the emotions. Not developed from the beauty of the human form? of course. But there is a spirit of the senses as there is a spirit of the intellect; and it has its own art, a distillation of its life, as I intimated in speaking of the landscape that leads one into the mood of a dream — a dream of the senses. This art is akin to that landscape — it is of the life of the senses; and the Arabs were always frankly a sensual race. And, however it be, the city has an artistic temperament, to me; it has no factory qualities in its aspect, its wares, or its people; it is yet virgin of the future, a dying perfume of the past. This flavor that I find in its art is not Arabian, though it flowered from that desert root; it is Andalusian, and comes from the skill and temperament of those old exiles who were driven out from the southern shores of Spain in successive waves of the Moorish emigration, each in turn sowing broadcast seeds of the most exquisite Arab art all along the shores of North Africa, and richly

here at Tunis. It was an hereditary art, in families of builders, wood-carvers, stone-cutters, stucco-moulders, painters, gilders, dyers, embroiderers, leather-workers, damaskeen-workers, illuminators — the Tunisian arts of daily life, that gave to life that brilliant and exquisite surface in dress, utensils, interiors, and also broad urban artistic effects of luxury in the look of its commerce, the display of its multicolored crafts, and the vistas of its minaret-haunted sky. Tunis, in fact, is not altogether native, not of the pure desert blood; from the thirteenth century well into the times of the Renaissance it had a flavor not unlike that of a Greek colony in Sicily or on old Italian coasts; it was grafted with the flower of Andalusian culture, transplanted in adversity and flourishing on the African soil — blooming, perishing, and leaving this exquisite memory of itself, this intuition of vanished refinement and elegance, like a perfume.

To this Andalusian infusion is also traced the charm of the manners of the Tunisians, that gentleness of breeding, softness, and urbanity, blended with an immovable dignity, which is so indescribable a racial trait. It is not the least foreign thing about them, and adds to the *fond* of mystery that they exude; for, notwithstand-

ing all that can be seen or told, or gleaned from the past, mystery is of the essence of the traveller's impression at his first contact with the Arab race. It is a silent landscape, a speechless folk, an incommunicable civilization; it is not only the closed mosque, the secluded house, the taciturn figures strange in garb and pose, immovably contemplative; but their life — all that they are — seems a closed book in an unknown tongue, a scroll unrolled but unintelligible. The feeling of racial mystery is intense, and all external impressions lead the traveller finally back to that — the insoluble soul of the race. It is not merely Islam. These shores from the dawn of knowledge have been one of the most fertile couches of the animal, man; here the young barbarian has been born and bred, and passed away, through all the centuries, and every civilization of the West has been seeded in conquest, and has flowered in cities, typical capitals, and withered away, leaving among the native race its ruins in their fields, in their blood, on their faces — like the Christian cross still tattooed on Kabyle foreheads. It is a race that assimilates but is not assimilated. It has taken the color and form, more or less impregnated with the spirit, of the genius of Carthage, Rome, Byzantium, Islam, France;

it has felt the impact of Greek, Norman, Spaniard; but it was ever a race of inexhaustible resistant power, independent, tenacious, rebellious. It was never submerged or exterminated. It is a fine race. Tunis is one of its cosmopolitan cities, where it has drunk of every foreign stream and influence, has been civilized, softened, informed — a city of the various Mediterranean world, with great colonies of other folk in it, Italians, Jews, Maltese — a New York, as it were, on its own scale. In old Tunis, Arabized as it is, the desert race is itself only an infusion; yet so persistent is the ideal of race on its own soil, and so nomadic is the provincial population, that one feels the presence of that old racial soul, rightly or wrongly, into which the strength of the desert and the mountains has passed, which never breathed the breath of Europe, which remains in its own loneliness as in a fastness. It attracts and perplexes the human mind that would fain make acquaintance with it, but is oppressed by a feeling of impotence. And the exquisite personal demeanor of the Tunisians is enigmatic in its impression; it is like the charm of some Chinese painting or scroll that only emphasizes the unintelligibility, the incommunicability of the too variant spiritual past. With such delightful manners, such iden-

tical refinements of taste, it would be so easy to be friends! But no; it is more rational to think of it all as an artistic growth of a foreign culture, a part of the lovely Andalusian inheritance of the land.

To a mind with a historical background it is odd to find Tunis so completely a modern city. The Andalusian tradition is unconcentrated, and slight in its elements of reality, in things; its full experience is rather an imaginative memory; and of the times before that there is nothing left. In the suburban country there are more, though few, relics of past ages, but there the memory works more freely. One recalls, looking off to the sea-towering Mountain of the Two Horns, that on one of those peaks rose the ancient temple of Baal. The harbors of Carthage are fascinating to the eye of the imagination; but the specific remains there are scanty and mediocre; they arouse no reaction deeper than thought; and in the museum of Carthage one dwells most on the curious fact that what little has come down to us of that far-off life has found its way only by the grave itself; here, as in so many places, the tomb has been the chief conservator of life in its material aspects and what may be inferred from them of the soul of dead populations. It is rather in the neighborhood

of the Cathedral that memory expands, for beside the near home of the White Brothers, who have spread their mantles and left their bones throughout the Sahara, a noble mission nobly done, here survives the only recorded anecdote of the history of this ridge, that must have been the place of innumerable tragedies — the marvellously vivid Christian story of Saint Louis's death. The narrative is as fresh and poignant as if it were written yesterday; and on the spot one likes to remember that the chivalrous and good French crusader and king is a Moslem as well as a Christian saint. It is a symbol of peace and conciliation. The past, however, is here a barren field. Antiquity is felt, not in the survival of its monuments, but in the sense of the utter waste, the annihilation of the past, the extinction that has overtaken all that human life and its glory and struggle — Punic, Roman, Visigothic — the emptiness of the place of their battles, religions, pleasures, buildings, and tombs. It is all débris; it is of the slightest — little archæological heaps and pits in a vast horizon of silent sky and sea. The mind becomes merely pessimistic, surveying the scene; the mood of fatalism invades it — the mood of the frozen moon and the solar catastrophe — floods of the eternal nothingness — a mood of the pure in-

tellect; and one is glad to come back to some nook like Ariana, a village midway between Carthage and Tunis, where ruin becomes again romantic and human. The very roses bloom there as in a deserted garden of long ago. It was there that the Hafsides, the rulers of the golden age of Tunis in the thirteenth century, had their country-seats — fair as the paradise at Roccada, where one "was gay without cause and smiled without a reason" — surrounded by gardens, with great lakes shadowed by pine and cypress, and gleaming with kiosks lined with marble and faience, with ceilings of sculptured wood gilded and painted, and cooled by the fresh waters of many fountains. The love of the country was always a trait here — an Arab trait — the rich like to get out of the city to some place of quiet, privacy and repose, such as La Marsa to-day by the sea near Carthage. The sense of the reposeful country mingles with that of the beautiful city in the past as well as now; and the Hafsides were great civilizers, builders, favorers of trade, patrons of the arts and of science. Their works and their gardens are gone alike. Time drives his ploughshare often and deep in an African city; and it is not alone on the green and shining levels of the suburban country, with its great spaces and im-

perial memories, where every maritime and migratory race has written some half-obliterated line of history, that the mountains look on the sea, and there is a great silence; but ruin is a near neighbor in the city as well. How many nooks and corners, full of the romance of places left to decay! That, too, is an Arab trait: to leave the old to decay and forgetfulness. It is natural that things should die, and be let lie where they fall. Oblivion is never far off.

What lassitude at last! Is it only the nerve-soothing weather, which cradles and lulls, week after week, the wearied Western mind? Is it only a renaissance of the senses, coming into their own, restored and vivified with strange forms and colors, accepting the impermanence of things human, and content to adorn and refine the sensual moment, to withdraw and enjoy? or is it a new world, a new mode of human life, with its own perceptions and intuitions and valuations, a new form of the protean existence of men on the earth, with another memory, psychology, experience? Whatever it be it is a spell that grows.

VII

I LIKE to pass my afternoons in the shop of the perfumer in old Tunis. I come by covered ways, where the sunlight sifts through old rafters on stained walls and worn stones, and soon discern in the softened darkness the low, small columns wound with alternate stripes of red and green — bright clustered colors; down the winding way of dimmed light in the narrow street opens on either side the row of shallow shops, shadowy alcoves of bright merchandise; and there in the heart of old Tunis, each in his niche, canopied by his trade and seeming an emanation of the things he sells, sit the perfumers. A throng passes by, now dense, now thin — passes forever, in crowds, in groups, in solitude, rarely speaking; and over against the silent movement sit the merchants — tranquil figures in perfumed boxes — whose business seems one long repose. A languid scent loads the dusky air.

Just opposite the venerable Mosque of the Olive, an isle of sanctity still uncrossed by the heathen Frankish sea, right under the shadow of its silence-guarded doors, stands and has stood for centuries the shop where I love to lounge

away hours that have no attribute of time. My host — I may well call him so, we are old acquaintances now — salutes me, his robe of fading hues detaching the figure from the background as he rises; his serene face lightens with a smile, his stately form softens with a gesture, he speaks a word, and I sit down on the narrow bench at the side, and light the cigarette he has proffered, while his only son quickly commands coffee. How well I remember years ago when the child's soft Arab eyes first looked into mine! He is taller now, beautifully garbed in an embroidered burnoose; and he sits by me, and talks in low tones. What a relief it is, just to be here! What an ablution! The very air is courtesy. There is no need to talk; and we sit, we three, and smoke our cigarettes, and sip our coffee, with now and then a word, and regard the street.

A motley street, like the bridge at Stamboul — a provincial form of that unfathomable sea of human faces; and, here as there, an unknown world in miniature, diverse, novel, brilliant — the African world. The native predominates, with here and there a flash of foreign blood, round-faced Sicilians, Spaniards whose faces seem in arms, French in uniforms; but always the native — every strain of the littoral

and the highland, every tint of the desert sun: black-bearded Moors of Morocco, vindictive visages; fat Jews of Djerba laughing; negroes — boys of Fezzan or black giants of the Soudan; Arabs of every skin, hints of Gothic and Vandal blood and the old blond race long before all, resolute Kabyles, fair Chaouia, Touaregs with white-wrapped faces, caravan men, Berber and Bedouin of all the land; women, too, veiled or with children at the open breast. That group of Tunisian dandies — how they stroll! olive faces, inexpressive, with the jonquil stuck over the ear, swinging little canes, clad in fine burnooses of pale blues or dying greens or ashy rose! Those bare-legged Bedouins, lean shoulders looped in earth-brown folds — how they walk! Every moment brings a new challenge to the eye. What life histories! what unspeaking faces! how closed a world! and my eyes rest on the shut gates of the ancient Mosque of the Olive over against me; I feel the spell of the unknown sealed in that faith, this life — the spell of a new life of the spirit of man, the mystery of a new earth-life of his body.

One falls into revery and absent-mindedness here, as elsewhere one falls asleep; but not for long. A lady, closely veiled, stands in the shop with her shorter, low-browed attendant. I hear

low syllables softly murmured; I am aware of a drop of perfume rubbed like dew on the back of her hand just below the small fingers, not too slim; I watch the fall of the precious, twinkling liquid in the faceted bottle; I mark the delicate handling of the small balances. It is like a picture in a dream, so still, so vivid in the semi-darkness of the booth. She is gone, and the fancy wanders after her — whither? The boy's *taleb*, his teacher of the mosque school, passing, sits down for a moment — an alert figure, scrutinizing, intelligent, energetic. There has been some school excitement, some public commotion; master and boy both scan the last paper with eagerness. I ask about the boy's lessons; but with a kind look at my young friend, and a half reply to me, he puts the question aside, as if one should not say pleasant things in a boy's hearing too much. He is soon off on his affairs; and other friends of the shop come and go, not too often, some hearty, some subtle, but all cordial, merchants who would woo me away to other shops behind whose seemingly narrow spaces lies the wealth of great houses — oh, not to buy, but only to view silken stuffs, trifles of wrought silver, things begemmed, inlaid sword and pictured leather, brass, mosaic, horn, marvels of the strong and deft brown Arab hand in

immemorial industries; the wealth of a large world is nigh, when I please — it is but a step here to Samarcand or Timbuctoo; but I say, lightly, "Another day."

I love better to sit here, flanked by the huge wax tapers, overhung by the five-fingered groups of colored candles, amid the curiously shaped glasses and mysterious boxes, the gold filagree, the facets, the ivory eggs — and to breathe, only to breathe, diffused hidden scents of the rose and the violet — jasmine, geranium — essences of all flowers, all gardens, all odorous things, till life itself might seem the perfumed essence of existence and the sensual world only an outer dusk. Oh, the delightful narcotism! I was ever too much the Occidental not to think even in my dream — I am conscious of the feeling through all — "What am I, an alien, here?" But it is sweet to be here, to have peace, and gentleness, and courtesy, young trust and brave respect, and breeding; it is balm. The darkness falls; the passer-by grows rare; it is closing time. There is a drop for my hand now, for good-by. The boy companions me to the limit of old Tunis. It is good night. It is a departure — as if some shore were left behind. It is a nostalgia — a shadowy perception that something more of life has escaped, of the irretriev-

able thing, gone, like something flown from the hand. And as I come under the Gate of France into the lights of the brilliant avenue, I find again him I had eluded, whom I heard as the voice of one standing without, saying: "What am I, an alien, here?" — I am again the old European.

VIII

Quick music comes down the evening street — the clatter of cavalry — the beautiful rhythm of horses' backs — flash of French uniforms so harmonized with the African setting — spahis, tirailleurs, guns — a gallant and lively scene in the massed avenue! I love the French soldiers in Africa; but it is with a deeper feeling than mere martial exhilaration that one sees them to-night, for this is an annual fête-day, and their march commemorates the entry of the French troops into Tunis. One involuntarily looks at the faces of the natives in the crowds — impassible. But the old European cannot but feel a thrill at the sight of France, the leader of our civilization, again taking charge of the untamed and reluctant land and its intractable people to which every mastering empire of the North, from the dawn of our history, has

brought in vain the force of its arms and the light of its intelligence. The hour has come again, and one feels the presence of the Napoleonic idea, clad, as of old, in the French arms; for it is from Napoleon, that star of enlightenment — Napoleon as he was in his Egyptian campaigns — that the French empire in Africa derives; and if, as the heir of the Crusades, France was through centuries the protector of Christians in the East, and that rôle is now done, it is a greater rôle that she inherits from Napoleon as the friend of Islam, with the centuries before her. Force, demonstrated in the army, is the basis of order in all civilized lands; that is why the presence of the French uniform delights me; but it is not by brute force that France moves in the essential conquest, nor is it military lust that her empire in Africa represents and embodies. It is, rather, a striking instance of fatality in human events that her advancing career in North Africa presents to the historical mind; a slight incident — a bey struck one of her ambassadors with a fan — forced on her the occupation of Algiers, and in the course of years she found herself saddled with a burden of colonial empire as awkwardly and reluctantly as was the case with us and the Philippines. There were anticolonialists in her

experiences, as there were antiimperialists with us; and the arguments were about the same, essentially, in both cases — the rights of man, a new frontier, an alien people, with various economic considerations of revenue, tariff, exploitation. That obscure element of reality, however, which we call fate, worked on continuously, linking situation with event, difficulty with remedy, what was done with what had to be done, till the occupation spread from Algiers into the mountains, along the seaboard, over the Atlas, into the desert, absorbing the neighboring land of Tunis, skirting the dangerous frontier of Morocco — and now the vitalizing and beneficent power of French civilization, as it might almost seem against the will of its masters, dominates a vast tract of doubtful empire whose issues are among the most interesting contingencies of the future of humanity. It is a great work that has been accomplished, but is greater in the tasks it opens than in those already achieved.

The policy of pacification and penetration is, indeed, one of the present glories of France. There has been fierce fighting, hard toils of war; the land has been the training-school of French generals; and were it known and written, the story of French campaigning in the

mountains and the desert would prove to be one of those heroic chapters of fine deeds obscurely done, rich in personal worth, that of all military glory have most moral greatness. The *esprit* of the soldiers was like that of devoted and lost bands — they were there to die. But it belongs to military force to be initial and preparatory, occasional, in its active expression; thereafter, in its passivity, it is a guarantee; it is order. The great line of French administrative policy, whether playing through the army or beyond it, was, nevertheless, the child and heir of Napoleon's idea; amity with Islam. To respect rites, usages, prejudices, to make the leaders of the people — chiefs, judges, religious heads — intermediaries of power, to find with patience and consideration the line of least resistance for civilization by means of the social and racial organization instead of in opposition thereto, and to display therewith not a spirit of cold, proud, and superior tolerance but a frank and interested sympathy — that, at least, was the ideal of the French way of empire. It had its disinterested elements — respect for humanity was implicit in it. What strikes the close student of the movement most is not the military advance but the extraordinary degree to which the military advance itself was im-

pregnated with intelligence, scientific observation, scholarly interest, economic suggestion, engineering ambition, as if these French officers were less men of arms than pioneers of knowledge and public works. The publications through fifty years by men in the service on every conceivable topic relating to the land and its people in scientific, economic, and historical matters are innumerable; they constitute a thorough study of vast areas. Such a fact tells its own story — a story of devotion in a cause of civilization.

Peaceful penetration does not mean merely that the railroad has entered the Sahara, and the wire gone far beyond into its heart, and the express messenger crossed the great waste; nor that the school and, with it, the language are everywhere, subduing and informing the mind; nor that agricultural science, engineering skill, economic initiative, and even philanthropic endeavor, hospitals, hygiene, are at work, or beginning, or in contemplation; but it means the restoration of a great and almost forsaken tract of the earth — from the Mediterranean and Lake Tchad to the Niger and the Atlantic — with its populations, to the benefits of peaceful culture, safe commerce, humane conditions, and to fraternity with the rest of mankind. It

is not the brilliant military scene that holds my eye in the packed avenue, with its double rows of trees shadowy in the air, lined with brilliant shops and stately urban buildings, opera, cathedral, residence — the familiar modern metropolitan scene in the electric glare; but I see the work of France all over the darkened land from the thousand miles of seacoast, up over the impenetrable Atlas ranges, down endless desert routes — carrying civilizing power, like a radiating force, through a new world.

IX

Tunis is the gateway by which I entered this world — the new world of France, the old world of the desert. It was almost an accident of travel that I had come here, refuging myself from the life I had known, and seeking a place to forget and to repose, away from men. I had no thought of even temporary residence or exploration; but each day my interest deepened, my curiosity was enlivened, my sympathies warmed, and slowly I was aware that the land held me in its spell — a land of fantastic scenery, of a mysterious people, of a barbaric history and *mise en scène*, a land of the primitive. I coursed it from end to end.

The best description of North Africa as a visual fragment of the globe is that which delineates it as a vast triangular island, whose two northern horns lie, one off Spain at Gibraltar, the other, with a broader strait, off Sicily — with a southward wall overlooking the ocean-like Sahara, and running slantingly to the Atlantic, whose seaboard makes the narrow base of the triangle. This immense island is gridironed through its whole mass with mountains, ranging southwest and northeast, and hence not easily penetrable except at those remote ends; it is backed by table-lands of varying breadth between the Northern and the Saharan Atlas, which form its outer walls, and the conglomeration of successive ranges at varying altitudes, with their high plateaus, is cut with deep gullies, valleys, pockets, fastnesses of all sorts — a formidable country for defence and of difficult communication. Under the southern edge of the Saharan Atlas, like a long chain of infrequent islands, runs the line of oases in the near desert from the northeasterly tip of the lowlands of the isle of Djerba southwesterly the whole distance to the Atlantic, and here and there pressing deep into the waste of sand and rock; under the northern wall stretches the arable lowland here and there on the Mediter-

ranean coast where lie the mountain-backed ports. At the highest points, in Morocco, lies perpetual snow, and the land is snow-roofed in winter.

Among these wild mountains in antiquity lived an indigenous blond race, whose blue-eyed, clear-complexioned descendants may still be met with there, and mixed with them a darker population from the sunburnt desert and lowlands, the Getulae and Numidians of history, of whom Jugurtha was a fine and unforgotten type; on these original and tenacious races, whose blood was inexpugnable, poured the immigrant human floods through the centuries from north and south, west and east, but the natives maintained their hold and the stock survived. The Punic immigration, with its great capital of Carthage, only touched the coast; the Romans established a great province in Tunisia, founded cities and garrisoned the country as far as the desert and into the Riff, and made punitive expeditions among the nomads to the south; the Visigoths flocked from Spain, overran the whole country, and passed away like sheets of foam; the Byzantines rebuilt the fortresses, and their hands fell away; the Arab hordes in successive waves carried Islam to the western ocean, and, settling, Arabized great tracts of the Berber

blood, and made the land Moslem, but with a deeper impregnation than when it had been Romanized and Christianized; while through all the years of their slow and imperfect dominance new floods of fresh desert blood poured up from the Sahara, much as the barbarians fell from the north upon Rome. The massive island was thus always in the contention of the human seas, rising and falling; yet the Berber blood, the Berber spirit, continually recruited from the Sahara, seems never to have really given way; taking the changing colors of its invaders, it persisted — a rude, independent, democratic, fierce, much-enduring, untamable race. It wears its Islam in its own fashion. It keeps the other stocks, that dwell in it, apart; the Jews, the Turks, Italians, Maltese, Spaniards, are but colonies, however long upon the soil, and even though in some instances they adopt native costumes and ways. And now it is the turn of France — that is to say, of dominant Western civilization in its most humane and enlightened form.

How many interests were here combined! A land of natural wildness, of romantic and solemn scenes, of splendid solitudes and varying climates; a past dipped in all the colors of history; a race of physical competency, savage vitality,

where the primitive ages still stamped an image of themselves in manners and actions and aspect; the fortunes of one of the great present causes of humanity, to be paralleled with Egypt and India, a work of civilization! It could not but prove a fine adventure. And so I turned nomad, and fared forth. Bedouin boys, rich with my last Tunisian copper, gave me delighted good-bys as they ran after my carriage, screaming bright-eyed; and I felt as if I had already friends in the lonely, silent land as the long level spans of the high aqueduct marched backward, and the train sped on.

TLEMCEN

II

TLEMCEN

I

SNOW in April! I could hardly believe my eyes as I looked through the blurred panes of the one small window on the large, moist flakes falling thickly, the trees green with spring-time whose young foliage was burdened and slim limbs delicately heaped with snow an inch deep in the windless air, while the little park was a white floor and the half-invisible roofs a drifted curtain like a broken hillside — it was so like a snowy spring at home. I was in the unpretending hotel, in an upper corner room, bare, narrow, but clean, which reminded me curiously of such accommodation as one used to find in western Kansas towns thirty years ago, fit for the seasoned traveller, but without superfluities, — frontier-like, a border lodging; and the impression was deepened and vivified when I descended the rude and confused stairway and found the private-family dining-room, with the only fire — olive-knots burning reluctantly on a

small hearth. A French officer, hanging over it, made room for me, and in a moment two other officers appeared, heavily clothed with leather and capes, prepared, as I gathered, for a long ride in the country. It might have been a hunting scene in Colorado, in the early morning, except for the military color, the foreign physiognomy and the French coffee we were drinking; it had the traits of rude vigor, hardihood and weather that belong to an outdoor life.

It seemed more natural to go out into the snow than not, and so I found an Arab and went. Our path led us a short way through streets of Sunday quiet, and soon broke by a city gate into irregular country, picturesque from the beginning with ruined masses of old ramparts. The road was bordered with trees and hedges, a lovely road even in the snow, and soon it was apparent that we were passing through the midst of an old and extensive cemetery with cypresses, cactus, fig-trees, here and there an immense carob-tree, and olives and locusts, diversifying the uneven lines of the slopes; and everywhere, as far as one looked, neglected graves, shrines in ruins, koubbas — small, square, dome-covered memorials of the saints — dilapidated and with broken arches, the débris of

centuries of devotion and mortality. It was quite in keeping; for I was myself on pilgrimage, where for seven centuries the faithful Moslem of the land had preceded me, to the holy tomb of Sidi bou-Médyen, the patron saint of the little city. As he ended his earthly travels on one of these neighboring slopes — and he had wandered through the Arab world — he exclaimed: "How good it were to sleep in this blessed soil the eternal slumber!" and so they buried him there. It was a place of immemorial consecration; in early times of the faith a body of pious Moslems had been cloistered near by, and already in that age in these fields the "men of God" had their resting-places about which the Moslems liked to be buried, as old Christians used to wish to lie in holy ground about the church. It was even then a place of pilgrimage, and a village grew up about it, and ruins of minarets and mosques still lie there; and later, about Sidi bou-Médyen's shrine, another village was built among the encumbering graves, for he was a famous saint and many pilgrims came there, and now the inhabitants say pleasantly: "We have the dead in our houses." The landscape is thus a place of tombs; but it is enchanting, and one sees at a little distance terraced mountain edges, thick gardens of olive,

the pomegranates, the ancient fig-trees, masses of foliage and vines, abounding fertility and freshness, green and flowering with spring; and sown all along the tree-sheltered road the low and humble ruins of mortality.

I entered the village — the road ran a mile or more through such a scene — and climbed the steep way to the wooden door through which one comes into the precincts of the saint's tomb with its attendant mosque and school. I did not anticipate a mausoleum; I was familiar with such shrines and knew what I should see; but the square koubbas, with their white domes, which one sees everywhere in the fields, on the hilltops, all over this lonely country, give a grave and solemn accent to the landscape, and I felt the reverence of the place, remote and solitary, where so many thousand men had warmed their life-worn hearts in the glow of the faith. In the antechamber, adjoining the shrine, Moorish arches fell on four small onyx columns of beautiful purity, resting on the tiled floor, and just at my feet was an ancient holy well whose onyx edge was deeply cut by the wearing of the chain that had given water to twenty generations of those who thirsted for God. As I turned, the room of the shrine was open before me — heavy with shadows, almost dark, while

the light struggled through vivid, dull spots of colored glass, blue, green, red, on the obscurity where I saw the raised coffin, swathed with silken stuffs and gold-wrought work and thick with hanging standards; another coffin, with the body of the companion and disciple of the saint, stood beside, more humbly covered, and there were candles, chandeliers, suspended ostrich eggs, lanterns, and banal European objects, the common furnishings of shrines. I lingered a while with the sombre and thoughtful respect natural before a sight so very human, so impregnated with humanity. I noted the votive offerings on the door, bits of silk and tangled threads, which attested the humility of the estate of multitudes of these poor people — remnants of fetichism; and the strips of painted wood upon the walls of the antechamber, with ordinary Mohammedan designs, rude scrawls of art.

I issued into the court, in the raw snowy air, and crossed the narrow space to the mosque. It was a magnificent portal that rose before me through the falling flakes, raised on its broad steps as on a base, and lifting the apex of its wide horseshoe arch more than twenty feet in air; a high entablature expanded above. The whole surface of the gateway was covered with

arabesque work in mosaic faience to the architrave, bearing its dedicatory inscription in beautiful architectural script, and with enamelled tiles above — all in sober colors of white, brown, yellow, and green — and finely wrought in Moorish designs; it was a noble entrance. I passed within its shadows, and found myself in a stately porch, richly ornamented, the lateral walls overlaid, from a lower space left bare and severe, by delicately arcaded work in stucco as far as to the springing of the stalactite ceiling of the cupola, whose central points gave back the reflected snow-lights from below; massive bronze doors, sombre, rich in shadowy tones, filled the fourth side — their plates, riveted to the wood, chiselled and overspread with large, many-pointed stars engaged in an infinite lineal network of that old art, in whose subtility and intricacy and illusory freedom of control the Moorish decorative genius delighted to work. The momentary sight, as my eyes rounded out the full impression of the porch I stood in, was, as it were, a seizure; the novelty — for I had never before seen this art in its own home — the refinement, the harmony relieved on the sense of mass and space, the seclusion, the winter lights without, the cool and sombre peace, combined to make a moment in which memory

concentrates itself. It was an Alhambra chamber in which I stood; and the first realizing sight of a new art, like that of a new land, is a vivifying moment, full of infinite possibility, almost of a new life for the artistic instincts. I shall never forget the moment nor the place where the spell of the Andalusian craftsmen first thus seized me in the slowly falling snow.

The way led me on into the arcaded court, and then the hall of prayer, under the arches of its crossing naves, to the ornamented recess sunk in the further wall, the mihrab, which is the Moslem altar and guides the hearts of the people, as they pray, toward Mecca. Its arch rested on two small onyx columns, with high, foliated capitals, exquisite in their romantic kind; and above and about ran the arabesque decoration in plaster and all over the walls of the mosque and the surface of the Moorish arches, whose intervening roofs were ceiled with sunken panels of cognate but diverse design — a beautiful garniture of wandering lineal relief, like the veining of a leaf, netted in geometrical forms, emboldened with lines of cursive script, flowing with conventionalized floral branch and palms, varied, repeated, interlaced. The architectural masses and spaces defined themselves with firmness and breadth in contrast with this

richly elaborated surface; there seemed a natural unity between the design and the decoration, as of the forest with its foliage; through all one felt the effect that belongs unfailingly to the mosque — a grand simplicity. I wandered about, for a mosque charms me more than a church; and then I turned to the médersah, or college, adjoining its precinct, with its central court lined with scholars' cells and its hall for lectures and prayer beyond. It was pleasing to find a college under the protection of the saint. Sidi bou-Médyen was himself a scholar, bred at the schools of Seville and Fez; he retired to the anchorite's life on these hills while yet a youth, and being perfected in the friendship of God, admitted to ecstasy and invested with the power of miracle, preached at Baghdat, professed theology, rhetoric, and law at Seville and Cordova, and opened a college of his own on the African shore at Bougie, then a hearth of liberal studies, where his tall figure, his resonant, melodious voice and flowery and fiery eloquence gained him a great name; it was thence he was summoned by the reigning prince of Tlemcen on that last journey on which, nearing the city's "blessed soil," where his divine youth was passed, he died. It was quite fit that a college, as well as a mosque, should be

raised and perpetuate his name near his tomb. I left its portal and passed down by the stairway to the court, and gazed up at the minaret, decorated above and wreathed with a frieze of mosaic faience, that lifted its three copper balls at its culmination, dominating the little group of sacred buildings on this hill, so characteristic of the Moslem faith and past; and its slender and guarding beauty was the last sight I saw as I went down through the narrow way and issued into the village road. A tall, grave Arab youth, standing in the snow, offered me a great bunch of violets, which I took; and in the clearing weather I began my walk back through that broad orchard cemetery, with its endless human débris under the light fall of snow — arch and mound and wall among the trees, while brief glints of sunshine lightened over it. Cemeteries are usually ugly; but this is one of the very few that I remember with fondness, perhaps because here there was no effort to delay the natural decay of human memory. Death is as natural as life, and here it seemed so; there was no antithesis of the fallen ruin and the blossom springing in the snow, but a tranquil harmony. It is so that I remember it.

II

Later in the afternoon, the weather continuing to clear, I drove with a French gentleman — we were mutually unknown — to the cascades lying not far to the southeast. Tlemcen is posed at a somewhat high elevation on the last spurs of the ranges that encircle and dominate it from behind, and faces a great plain, bounded with distant blue mountains on the sides, and having the Mediterranean at its far limit, whose gleam can be seen only on fair, clear days. It is a spacious prospect; and the near view in which we drove by a rising serpentine road was finely mountainous — dolomitic crags on the right, and on the left a deep ravine denting the plain whose gently sloping plateau had many a time been a chosen battle-ground. Birds flew about the heights and verdure clothed the scene. The geological formation lends itself to numerous living springs; the upper limestone rests on sandstone, which in turn lies on marl and clay, and the mountain rainfall is thus caught in natural reservoirs, which issue in innumerable outlets in the porous surface. These successive ranges of the extreme North African shore are, in fact, a continuation of the hills of Grenada,

with which they form a great half circle, centred at Gibraltar, and with its hollow turned toward the Mediterranean; it is the country of the Moroccan Riff, and the character of the landscape on the African side is precisely the same as in Spain — it is Andalusian scenery. As we drew near our goal, the rocks took on more distinctly the picturesqueness of outline, due to long erosion; they had a look like natural ruins high in air, and opposite, just beyond the cascades, a superb cliff mountain filled the lower sky.

We passed through a little garden to the foot of the fall. It was a grotto scene. The water issued in masses from low cavernous walls and recesses over whose broken floors and spurs it poured. It was not a simple waterfall, however, that we had come to see, but a succession of cascades that fell from shelf to shelf far up the precipice. The whole scene was robed in new-fallen snow, and the way wet and slippery; but the ascent was easily practicable by a path that led up the incline, with many a gyration, often dipping into the bed of a flowing stream and mounting by the rocks in the midst, often too steep and slippery to climb without the friendly aid of bushes, grasping hands and canes. But one scrambled up, and the running water under-

foot, snow and icy slides, only gave a wild tang and gentle touch of adventure to the rather breathless labor; and every little while one stopped and looked below into the deepening ravine, or approached the falling waters in some new aspect, till we came out at the summit of the upper cascade, where it poured beautifully down in the midst of a cirque of pointed rocks that rose from an indescribably fantastic mass of juts and hanging eyries, as it were, all clothed and thick with vegetation, vivid and bathed, inexpressibly fresh, trees and shrubs and flowers and vines, an exuberance of plant life; and the glittering cascade fell spraying far into its rocky heart and sent back mellow music from the depth. "It is a landscape of Edgar Poe," said my companion. I was startled for a moment, but a glance assured me that the aptitude of his remark was unknown to the speaker — it was only a spontaneous tribute to genius, which perhaps the casual presence of an American had helped to germinate. But, indeed, the impression of the scene could hardly have been better given than in those words. It was "a landscape of Edgar Poe" — just such a one as he would have chosen as the scene of one of his romances, as my companion went on to say; it was *sui generis*, fantastic, a marriage of the garden and

the wilderness, not without a touch of *diablerie*, the suggestion that would make of such a retreat the haunt of Arabian fancy, primitive tragedy, and enchanted legend. It had the formal character of romance and the atmosphere of natural magic; a place where *unearthliness* might find its home. That was the Poesque trait that the random suggestion, perhaps, overdefined. This scene, however, was not all, as, indeed, our ears warned us; and crossing a narrow crown of land toward the muffled roar, we saw another falling river; the slender column of wavering waters came from a great height, sprayed and united, and rushed with a flood of force and speed to join the waterfall below; it had the beauty of something seen against the sky, in contrast with what was seen below against the earth; it was a unique combination, and the only time I have ever seen the junction of two rivers by the waterfall of one flowing into the waterfall of the other.

We went by an upper path to the high viaduct of a railroad that crosses the deep glen at that point, and thence commanded the broad expanse of the seaward plain with its near amphitheatre of mountain ranges, and Tlemcen lying below on its headland among its orchards. The reason why it grew up, and stood for centu-

ries, was plain; it is the key of the country. It seemed, and is, a garden city; and as we walked or scrambled down the looped pathway over the terraced face of the hill on that side, and drove on round the circuitous road and back on our track to the city, I was most struck by the endless orchards lying beneath us on the bottom-lands at the foot of the ravine, and others through which we passed; and during all my stay I saw them — orchards of orange, lemon, almond, peach, and pear, and apple trees, and olives, and especially cherries, in profusion everywhere, and among them the constant sound of running waters from the springs.

III

The fruit-bearing feature of the country must have been an original trait. Pomaria, or as one might say in our own phrase, Orchard-town, was the name of the first settlement in the colonizing days of Rome. I walked to the place, just under the northern wall of the city, one morning for a stroll. I was soon at the foot of the tall minaret of the ruined mosque of Sidi Lahsen that rises on the site of old Agadir, which was the Berber name that next absorbed the Roman Pomaria; and I saw the Latin-inscribed

stones built into the foundation, ruin under ruin, as it were; for the walls of the minaret, which towered a hundred and fifty feet, were dilapidated, their enamel weather-worn, showing faded green and yellow tones in the rectangular spaces on the sides and the bordering band at the top, which bore the ceramic decoration; the campanile above, tipped with a stork's nest and a stork, added a touch of lonely desertion, and grass and flowers were growing between the stones of the adjacent roofless floor. Ruined mosques are often as beautiful as English abbeys.

I wandered on through a country district over which was scattered a native village, but in the main an open region. It was remarkable for the number of old trees it contained; and, indeed, hardly less striking a feature of the landscape of Tlemcen, in general, than its garlanding orchards is this grouping of old trees, though it is rarer. The whole African coast affords specimens of trees of great mass and age. I remember one such on the eastern borders of Algeria that I found among the fields, deep in the country; or rather I was guided to it by the Arab children I had gathered in my train, and especially by one Bedouin shepherd lad who had left his wandering herd to fol-

low me, and they insisted that I should see the sacred tree. It was a monarch of the vale — one of a group of three; massive in foliage, long of limb, great of girth, horizontal in aspect, a leaning, almost fallen, tower of the forest. It looked as if centuries were indifferent to it — it was so old. It was a holy tree, a *marabout*, as they called it; and bits of cloth, strips of rags, fluttered from its boughs, where they had been placed as votive offerings by the poor people of the district. I was told that I should put some copper coins on the bough or in the hollow, for an offering and to have good fortune, for no one would take them, and I did so, glad to pay my devoirs and wondering inwardly how long it was since my own far ancestors had joined in tree-worship. It was the first time I had ever seen a sacred tree, one actually worshipped, and it touched my imagination. At Tlemcen I saw no tree so fine as that; but there were several that bore a patriarchal resemblance; and in the morning stroll I speak of I found a grove of them, not close together, but spread out over the open landscape and nigh enough for neighborhood. They were terebinths, old ruins of the vegetable world, with that same horizontal reach and earth-bowed air — they might almost seem on their

knees in some elemental adoration; age filled them; in that cemetery — for it was a cemetery — they were monumental. It was a quiet landscape; cattle were grazing here and there; three or four ruined koubbas with broken arches and fallen walls rose at intervals, once stately monuments, for this was the burial-place of the royalty of Tlemcen in their empire years. Not far away, on a knoll, in a place apart, was the shrine of the first patron saint of the city, then Agadir — for Sidi bou-Médyen was a later comer, and saints, like dynasties, have their times and seasons, and this cemetery of the City-Gate was old before his hillside began to know the furrow of death. The first patron, Sidi Wahhâb, a companion of the Prophet and a comrade of the conqueror, lies under the terebinths. Pointed by a magnificent tree, I passed along its shadow down a shelving, stony way to a little garden of roses; there, in the hollow, sunken in the surrounding soil by its antiquity, I found the grave of Sidi Yaqoub, walled, but open to the sky — a lovely place, with the rose and the terebinth and the sky. This cemetery of the City-Gate was a kind of spiritual outpost for protection; the saints, indeed, camped about all the gates to guard the city in their death; nor was it altogether in vain; it is related of at

least one prudent conqueror that he carefully inquired as to number and virtue of the saints who lay at the various gates, as if they had been modern batteries, and selected for attack that postern where least was to be feared from the ghostly artillery. The position at the spot I have described was uncommonly strong.

I followed on my return the broken line of the old ramparts of Agadir, a knife-edge path, or divide, as it were, a climbing, tortuous, rough way, great masses of red soil heavily overgrown with vivid vegetation, trees, bushes, vines, emerging on a bewildering combination of gardens and tanneries — a dilapidated, ruinous way it was altogether. I remember a Tower of the Winds that might have been on the Roman campagna; and to the north there was always the broad prospect of the great plain. It was but a short walk from here to one of the modern gates of Tlemcen, that stands on a higher level than Agadir; and just under it I came on the mosque of Sidi'l-Halwi, or, as one would say, Englishing his name, Saint Bonbon. In his mortal days he made sweetmeats for the children, and the touch of a child's story hangs about his legend. When the wicked vizier beheaded him and his body was cast outside the gate, it was said that in answer to the guardian's nightly

call for all belated travellers to enter, the poor ghost would cry from the outer darkness: "Go to sleep, guardian; there is none without except the wretched Saint Bonbon." The repeated miracle found the ears of the Sultan and was verified by himself in person, and the wicked vizier was at once sealed up alive in the neighboring wall, which was conveniently being repaired at the time, and the body of the saint was honorably laid in the shrine where it still reposes in the shelter of another of those secular trees — a carob, this time; and duly the mosque rose hard by with its fair minaret, on whose faces still the brown and yellow tones of the half-obliterated faience duskily shine in the sun. I entered under the portal, partly sheathed in the same weather-battered colors, with touches of blue and green, relics of an older beauty, and I rested there an hour about, under the fretted wooden ceilings, untwining the sinuous arabesque patterns of the arcaded walls, cooling my eyes with the translucent onyx columns of the nave — low columns with Moorish capitals, whose gentle forms attested the burning here ages ago of the lamp of art.

IV

A LITTLE to the west of Tlemcen, and almost adjoining it, stands another ruined city, Mansourah. I rambled out toward it on a road alive with market-day bustle and travel, where the country people were arriving in groups with produce and beasts of burden, and the interest of the weekly holiday in town — a rough, hard people, not at all like the Tunisians, but doubtless of a more vital stock. The French cavalry were exercising in the Great Basin that had once been like a lake in that quarter of the city, a part of the water-works of the old days. Almost as soon as I was beyond the gate I saw Mansourah lying on the slope near by, well marked by its great ramparts, with towers. It was the site of an immense fortified camp, where once a Moroccan army had sat down to besiege Tlemcen, and had abode many years in that great siege, and had built a city to house itself. At one point began a paved road, and I passed down its well-worn, smooth flags into the enclosure, which was wooded with olives, and looked like a large orchard, showing spaces of strewn stone, some rough, ruined masses, and on the far side a lofty single tower. The fallen stones in-

dicated the place of the palace, and the tower was the minaret of the destroyed mosque. In those fighting days a siege might consume a reign, and an army was a population; the march might seem a migration; the army brought its women and children along with it and the people who were necessary to its subsistence, traders and the like, and established ordinary life on the spot; a city grew up, and in this case, perhaps, throve especially on the intercepted caravan trade that could no longer find its natural and customary outlet through the besieged town; and if the war were waged successfully the new city would swallow up the old one that would fall to decay. So Tagrart, long before Tlemcen, had been the camp over against Agadir, and, conquering, had become the new seat of the city. The lot of Mansourah, however, was different; it did not finally succeed, but Tlemcen in the end drove the plough over the new city, exterminating it, and leaving only these ruins to be the memorial of the event.

I found little of interest in the detail except that splendid tower, which was a spectacle of ruin; it commanded the scene by its single and solitary figure, and was imposing to the eye and to the mind. It was a minaret, but of a different order from any I ever saw. It stood in the

middle of the façade of the mosque, which was entered by the central door of the minaret, massively crowned by concentric arches over the portal; and this base was continued above, in the upper stories, by a bolder and more solid construction than usual, with ornamental details fitted to its severe lines, with a balcony halfway up, and at the top a group of small Gothic arches. It was thus more like a cathedral tower in aspect, position, and use; and in its majestic ruin it seemed such. The treatment of the surface, however, was altogether Moorish. The material was a beautiful rosy stone; and, overlaid on this, one still saw the half-obliterated green and blue lights of the incrusted work like a dull peacock lining. The discreet relief of this ceramic ornament on the rose stone, used as a ground and having its own warm and massive effect in the harmony of tints, must have made a superb example of that mosaic art of color which treated great surfaces like a jewel box. But what a marvel it is to find the camp of a horde of Berber tribes, in the confusion of a fierce and bloody siege, a *foyer* of the great arts — of architecture, delicate sculpture, and mosaic color! All those onyx columns that have so delighted me were brought from these ruins and reset in their new places in Tlemcen. What an interest-

ing group of impressions a few days had brought me, here! not one city, but a nest of cities, like a nest of boxes — or like Troy, superposed one on another: Pomaria, Agadir, Tagrart, Mansourah, Tlemcen. A necropolis of saints; a mountain-pleasance of fountains, orchards, grottos, the haunt of pigeons and fruits, rich in the privacy and delights of country life; a land of campaigns, and Berber dynasties, and sieges! I began to feel the inadequacies of my schoolboy geography and college histories, the need of a new orientation of my ideas to serve as a ground-plan for my knowledge of the people and its past, the race-character; and, on my return, I sought out the book-shop — an excellent one — and purchased all the little city could tell me about itself.

V

The conversion of a people to a new religion, notwithstanding the glory of apostolic legends, must have always been largely a nominal change. The victorious faith takes up into itself the customs and cardinal ideas, the habits of feeling and doing, the mental and moral leaf-mould, as it were, of the old, and it is often the old that survives in the growth under a new name and

in a new social organization. It was thus that Catholicism re-embodied paganism, whether classical or heathen, without a violent disturbance of the primeval roots of old religion with its annual flowering of fêtes, its local worships, its sheltering thoughts of protection in the human task-work, its adumbrations of the world of spirits, its ritual toward the good and evil powers; and the religion of Mohammed, sweeping over Africa on the swords of Arab raiders and hordes, subdued the country to the only God, but the Berber soul remained much as it had been, a barbarian soul, still deeply engaged in fetichism, magic, diabolism, primitive emotions, and ancestral tribal practices — superstition; nor was this the first time that the Berber soul had encountered the religion of the foreigner, for pagan temples and Christian churches already stood upon the soil. The faith of Mohammed was more fiercely proselytizing; it was, moreover, of desert and tribal kin; and it imposed its formulas and exterior observance more widely and thoroughly than its predecessors.

The Berber race, nevertheless, was hard-bitted, obstinate, independent; it was scattered over deserts and in mountain fastnesses; its conversion was slow and remained imperfect in spite of much missionary work on the part of

the pious proselytizers from the schools of Seville and Fez, who in later generations followed the fiery conquerors to "Koranize" the rude mountaineers, such as those of Kabylie, and settled beside them as daily guides and teachers. Long after the first conquest Christianized Berbers and other dissident groups were to be found here and there, and were tolerated. The elements of primitive savagery held their own in the life of the people at large, just as pagan practice and thought survived in southern Italy, and in the last century were easily to be observed there; the Riff, in particular, was a stronghold of magic; and everywhere beneath the thin Moslem veneer was the old substratum of superstition embedded in an unchanging savage heredity of mood, belief, and social custom. Fetichism persisted in the mental habit of the people, and still shows in their addiction to holy places, magical rites and modes of healing, charms and amulets, and the whole rosary of primitive superstition.

The Berbers were also by nature a Protestant race; their independent spirit quickly availed itself of every sectarian difference, reform or pretension, to make a core of revolt, inside the pale of the religion, against their foreign orthodox masters. It was their way of asserting their na-

tionalism against the Arab domination; it was, essentially, a political manœuvre. The first great Moslem heresy, Kharedjism, instituted by the followers of Ali, the son-in-law of Mohammed, found the Berber tribes an army flocking to its banners; and, afterward, wherever schism broke out or a pretender arose, there were the Berbers gathered together. In that world they were the opposition. Islam itself, by the example of Mohammed, had shown the way; every tribe had its inspired prophet, sooner or later; and one, at least, among them, the Berghouaia, once most powerful in this region, had its own Koran, specially received in the Berber tongue from the only God, whose prophet in this instance was Saleh. The expectation of the Mahdi, too — the last imam, who, having mysteriously disappeared, shall come again to bring justice on the earth — a tradition that mounted to Mohammed himself, was an incentive to his appearance; and inasmuch as the prediction circulated under the popular form — "the sun shall arise in the west" — the Berbers regarded themselves as the chosen people among whom the Mahdi should arise. Under these conditions there was no lack of Mahdis. One of them, the greatest, Obéïd Allah, the Fatémide, built that lonely seaport of Mahdia on the Tunisian coast, whence

he extended his sovereignty over the Moslem dominions from the Egyptian border to the Atlantic, including Sicily, and warred on Genoa, Corsica, and Sardinia; but his son had to contend with a prophet pretender, "the man with the ass," who with a great following from the tribes maintained himself for a while, until between his own new-found taste for fine horses and the desire of the tribesmen to return to their own country, his authority and the army melted away together, like snow in the desert. It was a characteristic incident in Berber history.

The natural and various course of such events had ample illustration in the Morocco country about Tlemcen. Edris, the last alleged descendant of Ali, found refuge in this quarter on the Atlantic edge of the Mohammedan world; the Berbers, after their custom of rallying about a promising dissenter, soon had him at their head; his son founded Fez, and the dynasty was prosperous and glorious. Then a cloud appeared in the far south, a cloud of horsemen with the veil — I suppose the blue veil that I associate with the Touaregs, themselves doubtless the best living type of that old horde of desert raiders. They mounted up from the borders of Senegal, gathering masses of foot-followers as they went, preaching a reform of faith and

manners, breaking all musical instruments, and cleansing the land; they were fighting Puritans of their age and religion, establishing an austere life and a pure form of the faith. So the princely Edrisides gave place to the princely Almoravides, and their dynasty, too, was prosperous and glorious, and extended its realm into Spain. Then rose the Mahdi. In this instance he was Ibn Toumert, a Berber, lame and ugly, small, copper-colored, sunken-eyed, who had schooled himself at Cordova, and then, like Sidi bou-Médyen, warmed his enthusiastic and mystic temperament in the oriental fires of Baghdat and Mecca, and had returned along the cities of the African seaboard a reformer, breaking wine-casks and violins, and publicly reproaching devout dignitaries for corruption of manners, even the reigning prince of the Almoravides. He was soon the Mahdi, with a new Koran, institutor of the sect of the Unity of God, which after his death came to the throne of the country in the dynasty of the princely Almohades. The students of Tlemcen had once sent one of their number to the prophet with an invitation to come and teach them; he, however, found himself ill at ease in the college, and soon went away into hermitage among the mountains; but the youth remained with him as his disciple

and companion, and it was this youth, Abd el-Moumin, who founded the new dynasty, like its predecessors prosperous and glorious; and it was he who drove the Normans out of their last stronghold at Mahdia, having extended his power so far, and with his conquering arms brought the Andalusian arts to Tunis. In the four centuries of this brief historic survey — from the eighth to the twelfth — a sectary, a reformation, and a Mahdi were the initial points on which the great changes of the government of the country turned.

It might seem that in this civilization politics was only another form of religion; but, deeply engaged as political changes were in religious phenomena, this is perhaps a superficial view. It may also be maintained that the Berbers took no metaphysical interest in dogma, and found in divergent sects and the incessant agitation of unbridled religious enthusiasm only modes of partisanship and levers of political ambition; their religion was, at least, compatible with a vigorous secular life. On the theatre of history religious events gave to politics their dramatic form, at moments of crisis; but the religious life of the community is not to be found in them, but rather in facts of more usual nature and daily occurrence. The cardinal fact, and one

that swallowed up all the others, from this point of view, was the extraordinary development of saint worship; its mortal efflorescence and fossilized deposit, so to speak, was this strata of tombs, koubbas, which cover the region. The Marabout, to give the saint his peculiar designation, was a man bound to religion, and was called the "friend of God"; he was revered in his life, and in his death be became the protector of the locality of his tomb, the intermediary of prayer to Allah, whose personality he obscured and tended to displace in practice. It was natural that the cult of saints should flourish in such a superstitious population; and the country itself, by its inaccessible character — desert and wilderness — lent itself to hermit lives, to types of the religious brooder and mystic, the solitary, with his dreams, illusions, and trances. Religious consecration was also a protection in a country of rapine and disorder, and a source of profit among a credulous people. There was, indeed, in the circumstances everything to favor such an order of men. It appears, also, that in the time of the great exodus of the Moors from Spain, a considerable body of fugitives, learned men, found refuge in the Zaouïa of Saguiet-el-Hamra, a famous monastery in Morocco; and the labor of these "men of God,"

pious and ardent, who seemed to be almost of another order of beings between mankind and the divinity, is sometimes assigned as the original source of the magnitude of the development of saint worship in these regions. It was they who "Koranized" the tribes, a body of missionary monks, educated, devoted, with the traits of apostolic zeal and ascetic temperament. There were Marabouts long before their day, but to them and their example may be due the fact that the tombs, the holy koubbas, increase toward the west, beyond Algiers and in Morocco, where they "star" the earth.

The lives of the Algerian saints, of which many may be read, do not differ materially from that kind of biography in any religion. Every village has its patron saint, its "master of the country," as he was called, and, as at Tlemcen, one may oust another with the lapse of time. The koubba was a shrine, a local hearth of religious life and practice, and the worship of the shrine was the near and warm fact in daily experience; the veneration of the Marabout appears to hold that place in the hearts of the people where religion is most human. The Marabout himself was of many types, ranging from plain idiocy, as was the case of Sidi bou-Djemaa on the hill above Mansourah, to

the mystic height, the "pole of being," as was the case of Sidi bou-Médyen on the hill above Agadir. He was miracle-worker, thaumaturgist, medicine-man, and might be consulted for all human events, from cattle disease to thief hunting; he was a preacher, a doctor of the law, an agitator, a recluse, a madman, anything out of the common; and the story of the legends runs the whole gamut of friar, anchorite, and fanatic in all religious history. Women, in particular, gathered about him and his shrine. In a region and civilization where there was no effective mastery of authority or reason, given over to individual initiative in a half-barbarized mental condition, such a development was entirely natural; and the landscape itself is the history and mark of it — there is a koubba on every hilltop, in the beds of the streams, on the slopes of the plains — sometimes clumps of them; in every prospect emerges the shining white cube of the holy tomb.

VI

The secular phase of Berber life in these ages is vividly illustrated in the person and career of Yarmorâsen Ben Zeiyân, the founder of the first kingdom of Tlemcen. He belonged to the

tribe of Abd el-Wâd, who, with their cousins, the Beni-Mérin, under the pressure of the Arabs of the second invasion, came up from the desert and took possession of the coast, the former about Tlemcen and the latter in Morocco. For many years these tribes, under the Almohades, had exercised feudal rights over the country; they came north in the spring and summer, and collected tribute from the agriculturalists and townsmen, and returned in winter to their desert homes with the supplies they had thus obtained. Their rise has been termed, not inaptly, a renaissance of the Berber race power, as, indeed, the entire history of the Berbers was a series of explosions of national force, succeeding each other in one or another place at long intervals, but impotent to found a permanent political state. Yarmorâsen was of the type of Tamburlane; a simple Berber, he was unable to speak Arabic, but he had military and organizing genius, became chief and conqueror, and founded the dynasty with which the glory of Tlemcen began. At the moment the Almohades were nearing their fall. The country is described as in anarchy: everywhere the spirit of revolt broke out, the people refused to pay taxes, brigands infested the great routes, the officials were shut up in the towns,

the country people were without protection; the region was at the mercy of its nomad masters. It was then that Yarmorâsen found his opportunity, seized independent power, and established order such as was known to that civilization. He was a great man of his race, brave, feared, honored, who understood the interests of his people, political administration, and the art and ends of rule. He reigned forty-four years, amid continuous war; he was defeated early in his career by the ruler of Tunis, but the victor could find no better man on whom to devolve the government than the foe he had overthrown; and it is an interesting point to observe that his ambassador of state, on this occasion, who made the treaty, was his mother. He was respectful of the rights of courtesy, at least, and won applause by his kind treatment of the sister and women of the Almohad prince he overthrew, sending them back to their own land under escort.

In the battle which marked the fall of the Almohades and the independence of Tlemcen there were characteristic incidents. The van of the march of the old princes was led by the Koran, one of the earliest and most famous copies, which the Almohades had captured from the Moors of Grenada and rebound and incrusted

with jewels; it was borne on a dromedary, and enclosed in a silk-covered coffer surmounted by a beautiful palm; small flags fluttered from the corners, while before it floated a great white banner on a long staff. It was thus that the Almohades always went out to war. When the two armies stood in battle order, the women on both sides ran through the ranks with uncovered faces and by their cries, gestures, and looks animated their warriors to fight. A similar scene is described by a modern author in writing of a Kabyle village feud; the battle-field, he says, was the dry bed of a torrent, between two slopes; on the heights of the ravine on either side stood the women, barefooted, bare-armed, uttering sharp cries which crossed over the heads of the fighters. "They are all there, their mothers, their wives, their sisters, their daughters, serried one against another like the flowers of a crown; even the widows whose husbands were killed in the last spring combat, even the *révoltées* who had left their husbands declaring they would no longer serve them, — all adorned and painted for the battle. Rich or poor, young or old, beautiful as idols or disfigured by age and suffering, they are all together, their arms interlaced, their eyes wide and full of fire, at the foot of each village, a confused

mass of ornaments, bright colors and miserable rags, lifted by one movement, erect with hate and terror." The men charge, fire point-blank, engage hand to hand with their yatagans — "better a hundred times die here than go back to the village, because their women will that they should die." It was such a scene when Yarmorâsen fought with the Almohad prince, Es-Saïd.

Yarmorâsen was more than a fighter; he was an enlightened governor. Tlemcen was then a double city — Agadir and Tagrart, not an arrow's flight between them. Tagrart had been the "camp" of the invading Almoravides, who had taken Agadir, and as victor it was now the city of the functionaries and government, while the people — the old inhabitants — continued to live in Agadir. Yarmorâsen cared for both, and built the minaret of Agadir, and also that of the grand mosque of Tlemcen, but he declined to inscribe his name upon them, saying: "It is enough that God knows." He built other public works and the city grew into a thriving capital, not only of war, but of residence and trade, and also became famous for its schools. Among other learned men whom his reputation as a protector of the liberal arts attracted to his court was one, brilliant in that century,

Abou Bekr Mohammed Ibn Khattab, whose story especially interested me. He was a poet, and commanded not only a fine hand, but a beautiful epistolary style. Yarmorâsen made him the first secretary of state, and he wrote despatches to the lords of Morocco and Tunis so elegantly composed that, says the Arabian historian Tenesi, they were still learned by heart in his day; and he adds that with this poet the art of writing diplomatic despatches in rhymed prose ceased. The Berber prince deserves grateful memory among poets as the last patron of a lost grace of the art, not likely to find its renaissance ever; and they must read with pleasure the starry and flowery titles with which the chroniclers adorn his glory — the magnanimous, the lion-heart, the bounteous cloud, the shining rose, the kingliest of nobles, the noblest of kings, the well-beloved, the sword of destiny, the lieutenant of God, crown of the great, Emir of the Moslems, Yarmorâsen Ben Zeiyân.

He left a line of strong and brilliant rulers who were warriors first of all, for the glorious age of Tlemcen was a period of intense life, and the little city had often to battle for its existence. It suffered reverses; not long after the death of Yarmorâsen a contemporary Ara-

bian traveller thus depicts it: "This city is very beautiful to see, and contains magnificent things; but they are houses without inhabitants, estates without owners, places that no one visits. The clouds with their showers weep for the misfortunes of the town, and the doves on the trees deplore its destiny with their moaning cry." Its recovery, however, must have been rapid, for in the next reign Tachfin found time in the intervals of war to build the Great Basin and a beautiful college, and he reared also the minaret of the great mosque at Algiers. These were the years of the life-and-death struggle with the Beni-Mérin, of which Mansourah is the monument. The great siege had been sustained and the peril beaten back; but now the enemy returned, and from a new Mansourah on the same site they directed their attack so well that they took Tagrart, old Tlemcen — Tachfin, the king, falling in battle. The victor, Abou'l-Hasen, was a worthy conqueror and the founder of the artistic Mansourah, that I have described, with its palace, its mosque, and its columns; he made the new city his royal residence, over against Tagrart as Tagrart had stood over against Agadir, and he adorned the suburbs of the old city; he built the mosque and college of Sidi bou-Médyen,

and his son the mosque of our good Saint Bonbon; he was an art-loving prince and a wide victor, magnificent in royal presents which he exchanged with the Sultan of Egypt, and in all ways glorious; but I remember him best as the conqueror who, after he had swept the coast of Africa to the desert limit, returning, stood on that solitary beach at Mahdia, that so impressed me, and "reflected on the lot of those who had preceded him, men still greater and more powerful on the earth." But this domination of the Beni-Mérin, who after all were cousins, lasted only a score of years; and the line of Yarmorâsen came to its own again, in the person of Abou-Hammou, of the younger branch. He had been born and bred in Andalusia, and was an accomplished prince. He wrote a book upon the art of government for the education of his son, which may be read now in Spanish, and he was a great patron of learning; he built a beautiful college, adorned with marble columns, trees and fountains, for his friend, the sage Abou-ben-Ahmed, attended the first lecture and endowed the institution with sufficient property for its maintenance. He, too, labored in war; but the remarkable trait of these princes of the rude Berber stock is that, notwithstanding the state of instant and long-continued warfare in which they held their lives and power, they

were as great builders as warriors, and unceasing in their patronage of learning and the arts. This was the great age of the city in the reigns I have touched on. A score of descendants carried on the rule through another century to the scene of trade, war, and study that Leo the African portrays in the city. He describes the various aspects of this great market of the desert, its buildings, and especially its four classes of citizens, merchants, artisans, soldiers, and students. Of these last he says: "The scholars are very poor and live in colleges in very great wretchedness; but when they come to be doctors, they are given some reader's or notary's office, or they become priests." Alas, the scholar's life! Doubtless it was the same in Yarmorâsen's time. It is a pathetic thing to me to think of those thousands of poor free scholars, through generations, seeking the light as best they could in this university city, for such it was — what a record of self-denial and deprivation, of belief in the highest, of living on the bread of hope! But it was all to end — the old Tlemcen — with the coming of the Turk; he came in the peculiarly atrocious form of the pirate, Aroudj, master of Algiers, who gathered all the young princes of the old blood royal, a numerous band, and drowned them in the Great Basin.

VII

In the brilliant years of Tlemcen, during which it was a spray of the flowering branch of Andalusian art, what is most striking and remains on the mind with a touch of surprise is the sense of the long and various contact of the Berber world with inherited Mediterranean civilization. We are accustomed to think of the north coast of Africa as a much-isolated country; but no place in the world is ever so isolated as it may seem to be; and the connection of the North African peoples with the centres of Christian history was never broken from the first Christian ages. Some Christian communities were encysted among the Berbers by the first Arab invasion; in the tenth century there were still five bishoprics among them. Charlemagne sent an embassy to Kairouan in respect to the relics of some saint at Carthage, in the reign of Ibrahim, the Aglabite, who received it with great splendor. The trade of the country was of vast territorial extent, reaching the Soudan and Central Africa and the furthest Mohammedan East; in the eleventh century negotiations were entered into with the Papacy with a view to attracting Christian merchants and

markets. En-Nacer, a prince of the Hammadites, sent presents to Gregory VII, including all his Christian slaves. The contact with the Christians as enemies, in Sicily, Spain, and on the sea, was incessant in the period of Moslem power. Christians, too, made a part of the mercenary troops of the Moslem armies; the Beni-Mérin are said to have had at one time twelve thousand such troops, and Yarmorâsen had two thousand, who mutinied and were slain; these were the last of the Christian cavalry in Moslem pay.

Contact with the old civilization was still more intimate and continuous toward the East in commerce and the arts. The Berber tribes of the coast had contained artisans from Roman times; but the Arabs were from the beginning dependent on civilization for all articles of luxury, and, especially in their religious needs, for the architectural arts. The mosque was built on the plan of Byzantine churches, and the Greeks and Persians became the masters of construction and decoration in building; Roman temples and palaces and Christian churches were the quarries from which materials were taken. The great mosque at Kairouan is "a forest of columns" of antique make, and in this it is an example of a general practice. Original

building came slowly into being, and was rudely imitative. The Andalusian art, as it is called, the special form in which the Moorish genius embodied itself, was evolved in Spain, and its history is incompletely made out; for although the Alhambra, together with other examples at Seville and Cordova, is its most perfect product, yet the art was developed also on the Moroccan side of the strait, and its creations at Fez, Marrâkeck, and other points still await thorough examination and study. The examples at Tlemcen belong to this African branch of the art, which was patronized by the early king of Tlemcen, and was most illustrated, perhaps, by the Beni-Mérin prince in his reign at Mansourah; for his predecessors at Fez had been rulers on both sides the strait, and were, therefore, in more immediate contact with the sources of the art, which, however, had already by reason of the emigrant Andalusians made Fez a noble Moorish city. As compared with Fez, Tlemcen was provincial.

The Berber princes ruled over a border state continually at war, and their city retained the rudeness of the nomad life; they were kings of a master-warrior caste among the other elements of the population, but with a pride in public works and a delight in decorative luxury, a

capacity for civilization and elegance, which transformed them into accomplished princes of Andalusian culture, like their neighbors. In realizing their ambitions they were, however, dependent on the aid of their neighbors; they obtained both workmen, architects, and in some cases material already wrought, from Spain, and especially from the lord of Andalusia, Abou'l-Walîd, who sent them the ablest artisans he could command. The legend that the bronze plates of the door of the mosque of Sidi bou-Médyen were miraculously floated there from abroad doubtless contains the truth that they were brought from Spain. Some of the tiles are of foreign manufacture. The art, whether in spirit, style, or skill, is to be looked on as an importation, though it achieved its works on the spot. It affords admirable examples, and they are of uncommon purity, since each newcomer did not restore and refashion older work in current modes of later skill or taste, but left it, as the Arabs will, to its own decay; this art is seen, therefore, very often just as it was in its first creation save for the ravage of time.

It was not an art of structure, though at times, as in the tower at Mansourah, it has structural nobility, or, as elsewhere, lines of grace; neither the architects nor the workmen

were expert builders, and they treated structural elements — the column, the arch, the dome — decoratively; these were subordinated to a decorative intention. The genius for decoration, however, found its main channel in the treatment of surfaces, sometimes curved and limited, but usually flat and spacious. It sprang rather from the art of graving than of modelling, and flowered especially in the line—arabesque. The line was employed in a series of geometric patterns — squares, polygons, circles — symmetrically arranged, and mingled with more or less distinctness; or in rectilineal or curvilineal combinations that were also patterns, repeated indefinitely; or in formalized script based on calligraphy. The origins of this mode go far back into antiquity; but its predominant use is the special trait of Moorish decoration. The second main feature of the art was in its color — mosaic. It is true that the lineal decoration of plaster and wood was painted, in red, blue, and olive-green, but this color has disappeared; for our eyes, so far as color is concerned, it is the mosaic that has survived; and here, too, the mosaic sometimes borrows its interior designs from the patterns of lineal decoration. The origin of this mosaic is also lost in antiquity; the art in one or another of its forms had long been widely diffused in the Mediterranean world. The Roman soil of Africa

had been covered with mosaic floors, which may still be seen in beautiful and varied collections of them at Tunis and Sousse; Byzantine work, such as is found at Ravenna and in Sicily, was a living art through the Middle Ages; and the contemporary Persian manufacture of tiles and similar work passed everywhere in the commercial world, and may be closely connected technically with the art in Andalusia. It was for exterior decoration that the mosaic faience was principally employed. The motives of the lineal decoration are few — disks, stars, and the like — and in the floral design only the acanthus formalized is used; similarly, the colors of the mosaic are few — manganese-brown, white, copper-green, iron-yellow, rarely blue. The combination of these few elements — colors and patterns — is unrestricted by any limit, they are undefined by any form, they grow by accretion, and they thus obtain and give the quality of the infinite, the illimitable, which is the most obvious trait of the arabesque. It is an art that plays with form only to escape from it, whether in color or in line.

The charm of this art does not lie merely in its perfect fitness to its light and cheap materials, nor in its easy solving of its own problems, but rather in its kinship to the Arab genius, its response to the desert spirit. This is most deeply

felt in the mosques, where it is in contact with the gravest things in life. The mosque is the plainest of sacred places, and delights a Puritan soul. There are no images of humanized deities or deified men; there is neither god nor saint nor mythic story; neither is there any mystery of dogma or speculation to be told in symbolism of material things; there is only unbodied and unformulated religious awe, the worship of the spirit in the spirit. The art that defines has here no function. The Western genius, master of life, is a defining genius; the oriental way is different — it is an effusion, an expansion, an illimitable going forth. This art, too, with its few motives, its paucity of fact, its monotony of structure, yet issuing always on the illimitable, the infinite, resumes the structure of the desert, which is similar in its elements and effects, its composition and its sentiment. It is also completely free from the burden of thought, the fatal gift of Western genius with its hard definings, too avid of knowing, whose art is rather a means to cage than to free the bird of life. It is an art restorative of the senses in their own kingdom — whether in line or color, a pure joy to the eye, a "disembodied joy," too, as art should be, full of abstraction, yet unconscious of anything beyond the sensuous sphere. It is easy to sum its salient technical points and to indi-

cate its obvious affinities with the mosque, with desert nature, with the Arab genius; but even though he see it, one cannot easily appreciate it in its decay, nor well imagine it in its fresh beauty, as a visible harmony for the soul, without some initiation into the fundamental moods of the race for whom and of whom it was. To me, nevertheless, the sight was a pure delight, as is the memory; a nomad art it seemed, born of the desert and expressive of it, an evanescence of beauty playing on fragile and humble materials, as life in the desert is fragile and humble, and clad in the evanescence of nature — life not too seriously valued, sure of speedy ruin, not worthy of too great outward cost.

VIII

I WENT out into the night on my last evening and wandered in the dark streets till the falling gleam of a Moorish café drew me into its shadowy spaces, where I drank a cup of coffee, listening to sudden snatches of native music and observing the swarthy and stalwart Arabs where they were banked up on a sort of high stage at my left. It was a characteristic but dull and lifeless scene. At a later hour I visited the moving pictures. The large, obscure shed was jammed full of rough-looking men and boys, French soldiers in

many colors, and Arabs in hanging folds, with life-worn faces, often emaciated; but I noted as a general characteristic that self-contained, self-reliant immobility of countenance that is the type of border men; it was the crowd of a frontier town. I went back to my hotel under the keen midnight sky at last, thinking of the long and crowded life of the historic past in this old caravanserai of the desert tribes, of the scenes of which I had been reading — the Koran-led army, the battle of the women, the palace feasts, night-long, where pages swung rose censers among the guests and the revelry ended with the morning prayer; of the great figures — the scholar-saint, Sidi bou-Médyen, the ascetic revolutionary, Ibn Toumert, the Berber shepherd boy who found a kingdom, the world conqueror by the sea at Mahdia, the young princes drowned; of the desert courage that had flashed here, a sword from the scabbard, of the desert piety that had here flung away the jewel of life a thousand times, of the generations of desert idealists who in the crowded schools had walked the way of light as it was vouchsafed to them; and in the waking reality of the French border town, whose night scene had depressed me, it seemed an Arabian dream.

FIGUIG

III

FIGUIG

I

I WOKE, in the train, on the high plateaus. Dawn — soft green and pallid gold, luminous, then dying under a heavy cloud while faint pink brightened on the sides of the great horizon — opened the lofty plain, boundless and naked, thinly touched with tufts of vegetation; as far as one could see, only the elements — color, cold, swathing wild herbage on rugged soil; and far off, alone, the haze of an abrupt mountain range. It was the steppe beyond Khreider. The vast, salt chott of El-Chergui, that streaks the middle of the steppe with its waste and quicksands, lay behind; but its saline arms still clung to and discolored the surface, and whitened the view westward with dull crystalline deposits. This wide blanching of the gray and red soil striped and threw into relief the rigid scene — aridity, vacancy, solitude, from which emerged the still grandeur of inani-

mate things. It was the characteristic scene of the high plains — a vague monotony, colored with sterile features flowing on level horizons. As the train ascended nature seemed still to unclothe and uncover, to strip and peel the land; but not continuously. From time to time the steppe lapsed back to a thicker growth of tough-fibred alfa, whose home is on these plains, and bore other dry, sparse, darkish desert plants upon reddish hummocks; on this pasturage distant herds of camels browsed unattended, as on a cattle-range, in the wild spaces fenced by rolling sands; then the climbing train would soon pass again amid low dunes. Few stations, at long intervals; isolated, meagre, they seemed lost in the spreading areas, mere points of supply; the most important was but a village, with sickly trees; but they took on an original character. They were fortified; obviously built for defence, with sallies and retreats in their walls; guarded casemates obliquely commanding all avenues of approach and the walls themselves; doors that were meant to shut. It was a railway in arms, a line of military posts, or blockhouses, as it were, on an unsettled border. The sight gave a tang of war to the silence of the uninhabited country, and reminded one of unseen tribes and of the harsh frontier of Morocco over

opposite, south and west. Slowly the mountains sprang up; one had already drifted behind, Djebel-Antar; and now the peaks of the Saharan Atlas, rising sheer from the plain a thousand metres, lay on either hand, bold crests and jutting ranges — Djebel-Aïssa on the left, the Sfissifa on the right in the southwestern sky, Djebel-Mektar straight ahead. We had passed the highest point of the line at an elevation of thirteen hundred metres, and were now on the incline and rapidly approaching the last barrier of the Sahara. We were soon at the foot of Mektar. It was Aïn-Sefra, an important military base.

But I did not think of war; to me Aïn-Sefra is a name of literature and has a touch of personal literary *devoir;* for there in the barren Moslem cemetery, outside the decaying ksar, is buried the poor girl who taught me more about Africa than all other writers; she had the rare power of truth-telling, and lived the life she saw; her books are but remnants and relics of her genius, but she distilled her soul in them — one of the wandering souls of earth, Isabelle Eberhardt. She was only twenty-seven, but years are nothing — she had drunk the cup of life. Here she died in the oued, the torrent river whose bottom I was now skirting, a wide,

dry watercourse, strewn with stones, and with roughly indented banks. It was dry now, but on these denuded uplands and surfaces, after a rainfall, which is usually torrential, it fills in a moment with a furious sweep and onset of waters; and thus a few years ago it rose in the October night and tore away the village below the high ground of the French encampment; and there she was drowned. The echo of her soul in mine, long ago at Tunis, was the lure that drew me here.

There, before my eyes, was the sight I had longed to see, just as she had described it. I knew it as one recognizes a lighthouse on a foreign coast, so single, so unique it was — the leap of the red dunes up the defile, fierce as a sword thrust of the far desert through the mountains. That was Africa — the untamed wild, the bastion of nature in her barbarity, the savage citadel of her splendid forces to which man is negligible and human things unknown. The dunes are golden-red, tossed like a stormy, billowing sea; they charge, they leap, they impend — petrified in air; an ocean surf of red sand, touched with golden lights, frozen in the act of the wild wind. They are magnificent in their lines of motion, in their angers of color; but the spirit of them is their *élan*, their drive, flung forward

as if to ram and overwhelm the pass with a wide sandy sea. The light on them is a menace; they threaten; nor is it a vain threat; they move with the sure fatality of all lifeless things, they will invade and conquer — a foe to be reckoned with; and to fend the valley against them, man takes a garden, trees, plantations, advancing a van of life against all that lifelessness. It is a superb picture there, among the mountains, a symbol of the struggle — the long battle of vegetable and mineral forces, clothing and desolating the planet; and it holds the rich glow of the African temperament, a spark of the soul of the land.

The train winds on in the bright morning air by a shining koubba, dark palm tufts, and the high, silent tricolor, and goes down the oued, turns the mountain, passes into the rocks, a strange scene of stormy forms and sterile colors, and makes from valley to valley by sharp curves, from oued to oued by deep cuts, piercing and grooving its passage to lower levels through the range of the ksour. Almost from the first it is unimaginable, that landscape. It is all rock in ruins, denuded and shivered, shelving down, disintegrating; fallen avalanches of rotten strata; every kind of fracture; whole hills in a state of breaking up into small pieces, pebbly masses,

bitten, slivered. We traverse broken, burnt fields of it, all shingle; expanses of it so, beneath walls cracked and scarified; we curve by scattered bowlders of all sizes and positions, down valleys of stones; new hills open, sharp-edged, jagged — continuous rock. All outlooks are on the waste wilderness crumbling in its own abandonment; all contours are knife-edges; the perspectives are all of angles. In the near open tracts lie relics and remains, mounds, mountains, and hills that have melted away; steep lifts on all curves; and on the sky horizon, following and crossing one another, saw-toothed ranges, obliquely indented with sharp re-entries, or else acute cones and rounded mamelons: the whole changing landscape a ruin of mountains being crumbled and split and blown away. It is an elemental battle-field, where the rock is the victim — a suicide of nature. In this region of extreme temperatures with sudden changes — burning noons and frozen nights, torrid summers and winter snows, downpours of rainfall — the fire and frost, wind and cloudburst have done their secular work; they have stripped and pulverized the softer, outer rock shell, washed it down, blown it away, till the supporting granite and schist are bare to the bone. It is a skeletonized, worn land, all apex and débris; near ob-

jects have the form and aspect of ruins, the horizons are serried, the surfaces calcined. It is an upper world of the floored and pinnacled rock, an underworld shivered and strewn with its own fragments, a "gray annihilation" — of the color of cinders. I imagine that the landscapes of the moon look thus.

A mineral world, bedded, scintillant, flaked. It is dyed with color. All life has gone from it, and with the departure of life has come an intensification, an originality, an efflorescence of mineral being. The earlier stages of the ride — the red mountains striped beneath with black, beyond the middle ground of a prevailing reddish tint sparsely scattered with a vegetation of obscure greens and dull grays amid strong earth colors, once with the bluish-black of palm-trees blotting the distance — I remember now almost as fertility. Here there is not a leaf — nor even earth nor sand. It seems rock devastated by fire, like volcanic summits. A sombre magnificence, a fantastic grandeur! Blue-grays, browns, and ochres of every shade gleam on the slopes of the hillsides; reds splash the precipices and walls; innumerable, indescribable tones, too gloomy to be called iridescence, shimmer over the mid-distance and die out in twilights of color amid the manganese shadows, on the cold

limestone heights, in the sandstone gullies. Where I can see the surfaces of the shivered stones, I notice their extraordinary smoothness. There are purples and black-greens and violets among them, but for the most part they are black, like soot; for amid this fantastic coloration, what gives its sombreness to the scene — the trouble of the unfamiliar — and grows most menacing, is the black. The land is oxidized — blackened; its shivered floor is strewn with black stones; black stripes streak its sides far and near; amid all that mineral bloom it is to black that the eye returns, fascinated, enthralled. It invades the spirits with its prolonged weirdness; it awes and saddens. And all at once we emerge from a deep ravine — oh, *la belle vie!* — a sea of dark verdure makes in from below, like a fiord, among the naked mountains round it — silent, mysterious, living, the green of the palm oasis; and swiftly, after that stop, we dip into the black gorges beyond Moghrar, more sombre, sinister — valleys of the color and aspect of some strange death, the incineration of nature in her own secular periods, the passing of a planet. Slowly vegetation begins — tufts amid the rock interstices, desert growths, the *chaufleur saharienne*, the drin, the thyme, plants of ashen-gray, stiff, sapless; trees now — be-

toums, feeble palms; a beaten track with a trio of Bedouin Arabs. It is the oued of the Zousfana; and we debouch on the far prospect — off to the right the oases of Figuig, oblong dark spots on the foot-hills of Morocco, and before us to the left the great horizons of the Sahara, the *hamada*. Five hours from Aïn-Sefra. It is Beni-Ounif.

I descended from the train amid groups of soldiers. I lose my prejudice against a uniform when it is French or Italian; and in North Africa the blue of the tirailleur, the red of the spahi, are a part of the *mise en scène*. These were soldiers of the Foreign Legion. I had been familiar with their uniform, too, in the north at Oran, and particularly at Sidi-bel-Abbes, one of their rendezvous; and I saw it again with friendly eyes, for all that I had here — harborage, security, freedom to come and go — did I not owe it to them? The Sud-Oranais is their work, like so much else in Algeria. I trudged through the sand, a young Arab tugging at my baggage and guiding me, to the hotel, which occupied a corner of an extensive flat building of Moresque style, rather imposing with its towers though it was only of one story, on a street that seemed preternaturally wide because all the buildings were likewise of one story. The whole little

town, a mere handful of low, fragile blocks, looked strangely desolate and lonesome, forsaken, isolated, dull. The host received me pleasantly — I was the only guest to arrive, and there was no sign of another occupant — and took me to my room in the single corridor; it was clean and sufficient — a bed, a basin, and a chair; a small, heavily barred window, at the height of my head, looked on a large, vacant court. So this was the *terre perdue.* I was "far away." "The brutality of life —" I was "clean quit" of it, like a lark in the blue, like a gull on the gray sea. "*Adieu, mes amis,*" I thought. Where had I read it — "The man who is not a misanthrope has never loved his fellow men."

There was a knock at my door: "Monsieur, some one to see you." It came with a shock, for the solitude had begun to seize me. I went toward the office. A young soldier of the Legion approached me, full of French grace, with a look of expectancy on his fine face. "I heard there was an American here," he said in English; "I did not believe it," he added; "I came to see." "Yes," I said, "I am an American." "There hasn't been one here in two years — not since I came," he spoke slowly — keen, soft tones. "South American?" he ventured. "No," I said, melting. "Truly from

the United States — where?" His look hung on my face. "I was born near Boston," I replied, interested. "I was born in Boston." I shall never forget the gladness of his voice, the light that swept his eyes. A quick, soldierly friending seized us — the warmth that does not wait, the trust that does not question. In ten minutes he was caring for me like a younger brother, introducing me with my letters at the Bureau Arab, doing everything till he went to his service. In the evening we met again, and so the lonely journey of the day ended in an African sunset, as it were, of gay and brilliant spirits, for I know of no greater joy than the making of friends. He was of French parentage, and the only American in the Legion; at least, he had never seen nor known of another. And I went to bed thinking of the strange irony of life, and how the first thing that the *terre perdue* gave me was the last thing I expected in the wide world — a friend.

II

I WENT by myself to visit the old ksar, the native village which had occupied this site before the coming of the French and the rise of the new town about the railway. It lay some

little distance to the west of the track — a collection of palm-trees, with a village at the farther end, backed by a white koubba. My Arab boy, who had never lost sight of me, had me in charge, and led the way. We crossed into the strip of barren country and saw the ksar with its palmerai before us, like a rising shoal in the plain. Accustomed as my eyes are to large horizons, this country had an aspect of solitariness that was extraordinary. The sand-blown black rock, the *hamada*, lies all about; the mountains of the Ksour that back the scene to the northeast are reddish in color and severe in outline, and the mountains of Morocco, cut here by three passes, block it to the north and west with their heavy and wild masses, while other detached heights are seen far off to the south. From this broken ring of bare mountains, red and violet and gray, the rocky desert floor, blown with reddish sand, makes out into the open distance interminably to horizons like the sea. In the midst of this the little ksar with its trailing palm-trees, Beni-Ounif with its slender rail and station, its white redoubt and low buildings, with the Bureau Arab and its palms a little removed, seem insignificant human details, mere markings of animal life, in a prospect where nature, grandiose in form and without

limit in distance, exalted by aridity, is visibly infinite, all-encompassing, supreme. The sun only, burning and solitary, seems to own the land. The moment one steps upon the windy plain it is as if he had put to sea; he is alone with nature, and the harshness of the land gives poignancy to his solitude.

We walked over rough ground awhile, and then crossed the dry bed of a oued, one of the channels that in time of flood lead the waters down to the Zousfana, whose shrunken stream flows in its wide rocky bottom some distance to the north of the ksar toward the mountains; and we climbed up on the farther side by crumbling footpaths that run on little uneven ridges of dry mud, twisting about in a rambling way, with small streams to cross, which groove the soil; and so we came into the gardens. The aspect, however, is not that of a garden; the background of the scene is all dry mud, whose moulded and undulating surface makes the soil, while the little plots are divided by mud walls, high enough at times to give some shade and meant to retain the irrigating waters. There are a few patches of barley, very fresh and green; but for the most part the plots are filled with trees — fig-trees, old and contorted, with their heavy limbs, the peach and almond with fragile

grace and new tender green, the pomegranate and the apple, and rising above them the palms whose decorative forms frame in and dignify the little copses of the fruit-trees, and unite them; but the dry mud makes an odd contrast with the branching green of varied tints and gives a note of aridity to the whole under scene. The plots vary only in their planting, and were entirely deserted. We came through them to the ksar itself with its wall. It is built of dry mud, which is the only material used here for walls and houses alike. The rain soon gives them a new modelling at best, and this ksar is old and ruined, half abandoned now that the French town is near. The outer wall is much broken, with the meandering shapelessness of abandoned earthworks — scallops and indentations, the smooth moulding and mud sculpture of time on the golden soil; and off beyond it stretches the endless cemetery, with the pointed stones at the head and foot of the graves, a tract of miserable death, so simple, naked, and poverty-struck, and yet in such perfect harmony with the sterile and solitary scene, that it does not seem sad but only the natural and inevitable end. It belongs to the desert; it is its comment on the trivial worthlessness of human life, whose multitude of bones are heaped and left here like the

potter's shard. The sun beats down on the wide silence of that cemetery; the sand blows and accumulates about the rough stones that seem to lie at random; there is no distinction of persons there, no sepulchral apparelling of the mortal fact, no illusion, no deception; it is the grave — "whither thou goest." And it is not sad — no more than the naked mountains of the Ksour, the dark Morocco heights, the silent sunlight; it is one with them — it is nature. On its edge toward the ksar rises the koubba of the saint, Sidi Slimane bou-Semakha, the ancient patron of the country; it is the only spot of this old Moslem ground that no infidel foot has trod; there his body reposes in its wooden coffin, hung with faded silks within its carved rail in the white chamber, secluded and sacred, and the faithful sleep in the desert outside. It is a world that has passed away.

The ksar itself was like all others in this region. They are walled villages adjoining the palmerai that feeds them; the houses are built of sun-baked earth supported on small palm beams and lean serried one upon another in continuous lines and embankments; narrow alleyways and passages honeycomb them, often with a roofing of the same palm beams, so that one walks in underground obscurity; externally,

owing to their old and weather-worn aspect, they have a general ruinous look. The walls on the street are blind; here and there in dark corners a seat for loungers is hollowed out in the side; there is somewhere a square for judgment where is the assembly of the elders, and by the mosque or koubba an open space. There is always a life outside the walls, a place for market, for caravans to stop, encampments of all sorts. All have a look of dilapidation. But this old ksar had more than that; it was obviously in a state of ruin and abandonment. Walls had fallen, exposing the wretched interiors, cave-like, mere cellarage. There was no one there. I passed through some of the covered ways — blank obscurity, with holes of naked sunlight. I did not see half a dozen living figures; they were unoccupied, listless, marooned. It was still — a stillness of death. I found the sources, the underground streams that supply the little oasis; there were three or four young negro girls standing in the water in discolored bright rags; they pointed out to me the blind fish in the water. "*C'est défendu*," said my Arab boy when I asked him to catch one. Life seemed *défendu*. The air was moribund. It was a decadence of the very earth. I was glad to have the hot sun on my back again by the

tall palms and green fruit-trees springing out of their dry-mud beds, and I sat down on a crumbling wall, amid the amber deliquescence of the rich-toned soil, and looked back on that landscape of decay, and sought to reconstruct in fancy the desert life of its silent years.

It was an old human lair. Its people, the *ksouriens*, who lived here their half-underground life, sheltered from the burning blasts of the summer sun and the bitter winds of winter, were a settled townfolk, with their oasis agriculture and simple desert market. The ruling race were the descendants of some Marabout; for the Moslem saint was a patriarch, and one finds whole villages that claim to be originated from some one of them; these men were the proprietors of the gardens, which were tilled by native negroes or Soudanese slaves and their progeny, a servile breed; and there were Jews, who were compelled to live apart, a pariah caste. Outside were the Berber and Arabized nomad tribes, scattered and living in fractions, who went from place to place for the pasturage of their flocks; their chiefs and head men were desert raiders, who took toll by tribute or pillage of the caravans traversing their country, and made forays on their neighbors; the people of the ksar held a feudal relation to these desert lords. The

most secure units of property in the land were the zaouias, or monasteries, bound to hospitality and charity, and ruled by Marabout stocks; their gardens and flocks had a protective character of sacredness, the goods of God. Society was in a primitive form of uncohering fragments, very independent, self-centred, uncontrolled; though it was of one faith, hostility pervaded it; feuds were its annals; it had pirate blood. A pastoral, marauding, sanguinary world, with elements of property and aristocracy, but democratic within itself, with slaves and outcast breeds; a world of simple wants but always half submerged in misery; a world of the strong arm. In such a world the *ksouriens* lived here by the mountain passes. They saw those old nomad tribes go by that mounted to Tlemcen and drank the bright cup of the Mediterranean for a season; but the *ksouriens* had forgotten them; their passage was only a wrinkling of the desert sand. Caravans stopped by the brown walls; raiders rode by to the desert; the seven ksars of Figuig fought petty wars, one on another, on the hill opposite; mountain women pitched their striped tents by the cemetery wall; the Jews worked at little ornaments of silver and coral; there was a coming and going to the fountain, secret and ferocious love, the woe of

poverty and hate — the Arab life of violence and ruse and silence, in the palm gardens, the underground passages, the darkened streets; a life of obscurity and somnolence; and the *ksouriens* grew pale like wax, with their black beards and corded turbans, and the old Arab vitality melted in their bones. The hours that no man counts rolled over the languid ksar, where white figures sat in the seats in the earthen wall along the covered streets in the silence; the unborn became the living and the stones multiplied in the cemetery; and there was no change. I could almost hear the bugle note yonder that brought a new world of men. And now the ksar was dead.

The moon, almost at the full, was growing bright in the eastern sky; the mountains of the Ksour, that still took the setting sun, glowed with naked rock, rose-colored; on the left the mountains of Figuig lay in black shadow, with the violet defiles between, clear-cut on the molten sky. As I stepped on the rise of Beni-Ounif it was already night; the brilliant white moon flooded the hard landscape with winter clarity; the unceasing wind blew cold. It was a solemn scene.

III

"Monsieur, le spahi." I went out in the early morning air and found my escort for Figuig, a tall, dark Arab, almost black, his head capped with a huge turban wound with brown camel's rope in two coils, and his form robed in a heavy white burnoose that showed his red trousers beneath; he held two horses, one tall and strong, for himself, the other, smaller and lighter, a mare, for me. My friend soon joined us with his mount, and, glancing at my mare as I also mounted, warned me not to rein her in straight with that bit, as it was thus that the Arabs trained their horses to rear and caper, and a strong pull might bring her up unexpectedly on her hind legs, and that, he said, was all I need be careful about. We trotted off easily enough down the street toward the railway, and in a few moments turned the last building and were on the route westward over the open plain. The old ksar lay far off to the left, the Zousfana to the north, and between was the unobstructed stretch of the rocky *hamada*, herbless and strewn with small and broken stones, to where we saw a line of straggling palms beneath the Morocco hillside. The air was brisk

and cool — just the morning for a gallop. The temptation was too great for my mare, who showed no liking for her neighbors, and, after a few partly foiled attempts, struck boldly off the trail to the left. I minded my instructions and had no desire to see what she could do on her hind legs. I had neither whip nor spur. I gave her her head. I was likely to have a touch of the Arab *fantasia*, and I did. I settled myself hard in the saddle as she flew on; she was soon at the top of her speed; it was the gallop of my life. Her feet were as sure as they were fleet on the pathless, rocky plain; she avoided obstacles by instinct; and if she came to a dry, ditch-like channel now and then that cut the level, with a slight retardation for the spring she jumped it, as if that were the best of all. But it was a pace that would end. After a mile or so she breathed heavily, and I, seeing some Arab tents pitched not far away, turned her toward them, thinking she might regard it as a friendly place, and so brought her up quite blown and with heaving sides. Three or four Arabs, very friendly and curious, ran up, and I dismounted. "*Méchante, méchante,*" they kept saying; and I looked at the shallow glitter of the mare's eyes, as she turned them on me to see the rider she had got the better of, and for

my part I said "*Furbo*" — something that I learned in Italy. My friend came riding up after a little to know where I was going, and said he thought I was "having a little fun"; and the spahi rode in, and, dismounting, also with a "*méchante*," changed horses with me. I said good-by to the friendly Arabs, and we rode off straight north to the route from which I had involuntarily wandered; but it was a fine morning gallop.

We came without further incident to the line of scattered palms, amid a very broken country, where the ascent makes up to Figuig, enclosed in a double circle of walls. Figuig is the name of the whole district. It includes a lower level where is the ksar of Zenaga and its vast palmerai, and a higher level on which are scattered the other six ksars amid their gardens. All are built of sun-dried mud, as are also the two walls, the inner being furnished with round towers at frequent regular intervals. We went on amid a confusion of gardens — fruit-trees with vegetables under them, such as beans and onions, and plots of bright barley in the more open places, but mostly palms, with little else, all springing out of the dry mud; we were past the ruinous-looking stretches of the brown, sun-basking wall, and began to be lost in a narrow

canyon, as it were, up which the rude way went between the enclosed gardens. There was hardly width for our horses as we rode in single file on the uneven, climbing path that seemed something like the bed of a torrent, and indeed every now and then water would break out from underground and pour down like a cascade or swift brook, with a delicious sound of running streams. On either side the garden walls rose a great height far over our heads, and above them brimmed branches of fruit-tree tops with the splendid free masses of palms hanging distinct and entire in the bit of blue. We seemed to be walled out of a thick, fertile, and beautiful grove; but they had only the same dry mud for their bed that was under our feet in the narrow, tortuous way. The sun had begun to be hot before we left the plain, and now, in spite of the shelter of the walls, the heat began to make itself felt; there was the dust of the country, too, which, slight as it was that day, is omnipresent; so, being both very thirsty, my friend and I dismounted at a place where the running water came fresh from the yellow ground, and we drank a very cooling draught of its brown stream. It is the scene that I remember best. It was like a defile in a narrow place; the way broadened here by a bend in the steep ascent;

one saw the brimming gardens below, and the view was closed above by the turn of the walls; and there, in the hollow, my friend and I leaned over the cascading water and, turning, saw the spahi, as he tightened the girths of my saddle which had loosened, under those walls, brown in the shadow and an orange glow in the sun, with the spring green starred with white blossoms like a tender hedge above their yellow tops, and the leaning palms in the blue. It had a strange charm; and the water made music, and it was solitude, and everything there was of the earth, earthy — and beautiful.

We came out shortly at the top of the ascent in an open space before a round archway in a wall, and dismounted in a scene of Moors passing in and out, whom I photographed; and then we walked on through the low-browed little street, which offered nothing remarkable except its strangeness, and found ourselves at the other side on a high rocky floor, quite mountainous in look, stretching off and off nowhere, which is the neutral ground lying about all the ksars; it looked as if the sun and wind had worn it out, and it had a rugged grandeur; a distant horseman on it seemed uncommonly tall and as solitary as a ship at sea. I got a slim palm wand from a group of Arab boys to use as a

switch; but my show of copper coin drew some beggars about me, very insistent, and when we mounted and rode off stones followed us. I have been stoned in various parts of the world and did not mind. The spahi, however, after the incident, took up his station behind. We soon reached another wall with a gate, on one side the inevitable cemetery, with its pointed stones, and on the other the Morocco army in the shape of a small squad of soldiers in soiled gorgeousness, lying about on the ground near their guard-house. They did not have a very military appearance, and paid no attention to us as we rode into the ksar and struck the narrow street, which was the main thoroughfare. It was quite animated, with many passers-by, whose oriental figures were sharply relieved on the walls in the sun or grew dark in the shadow. The houses were low, one against another, and their wall space was broken only by rude doors; here and there were higher buildings, often with little oblong windows aloft, with the effect of a ruined tower, or broken-arched façade, or square donjon; but these elements were rare, though at times they gave an architectural *ensemble* to little views against the sky with their fine shadows. Poor habitations they are, dilapidated and meagre they look, forlorn and melan-

choly to the mind, rubbishy, tumble-down, and ruinous to the eye; yet the air of ancientry everywhere dignifies the poor materials, and the sun seems to love them; human life, too, clothes them with its mysterious aura. The crude object partakes of the light it floats in, and every impression fluctuates momentarily through a whole gamut of sense and sensibility; for there is a touch of enchantment in all strangeness.

We dismounted in the middle of the street, half blocking the way with our horses, by a café, whose proprietor, a humble and life-worn old man, set himself to prepare us a cup of the peculiar Morocco tea that is flavored with mint. There were a few passers-by, and I busied myself with my camera. The café was a mere hole in the wall, of preternatural obscurity, considering its small size and shallow depth; the furnace and the teakettle seemed to leave hardly room for the old Arab to move about. I found a camp-stool and sat down opposite the low, dark opening, and, the tea being ready, was drinking it with much relish; it was truly delicious with its strong and fragrant aroma of mint, and was also uncommonly exhilarating. I was thus engaged when two particularly ill-favored Moors, each with a long gun over his shoulder, appeared, and planted themselves, one

on either side behind my shoulders, as close as they could get without actually pressing against me, and gazed stolidly and fixedly down at me. I paid no attention to them, but drank my tea, and from time to time dusted my leather leggings with my little palm wand. It was a picturesque group: my friend in his shining white uniform, unarmed, leaning carelessly against the wall in the sun, the tall spahi opposite in the shade regarding us, the two Moors hanging over me motionless, and no one said a word. After a while they seemed to have had enough of it, and went away with a sullen look.

We said good-by to our host and walked on, the spahi following on horseback at a distance of several yards, well behind, and two boys leading our horses. We were soon in the covered ways, where it was often very dark; we met hardly any one — a negro boy or a woman; the doors were shut, and it was seldom that one left ajar gave a scant view of the interior; narrow alleys ran off in all directions, down which one looked into darkness; but if we stopped to peer into them, or showed curiosity, the metallic voice of the spahi would come from behind, "*Marchez*," and at the frequent turnings of the way he called, in the same hard voice, "*À droite, à gauche*"; and so we made our progress through

those shadowy vaults, silent, deserted, in the uncertain light. It was like a dead city, motionless, hypnotized, as if nothing would ever change there, with a sense of repose, of negligence of life, of calm, as if nothing would ever matter; occasionally there were figures in the recesses sunk in the wall, silent, motionless — dreamers; one white-bearded old man, seated thus under an archway in a dark corner, seemed as if he had been there from the beginning of time and would be found there on the judgment-day. It was weird. We turned a corner in the darkness and came on a large group — perhaps a score — of young children at play in the middle of the street. I never saw such terror. They fled, screaming, in all directions, swift as wild animals; it was a panic of such instant and undiluted fear as I had never imagined. I cannot forget their awful cry, their distorted faces, their flight, as if for life, the moment they caught sight of us; it was a revelation.

A few minutes later we came out on a crowded square, full of shops, men working at their trades, others lying full length on the ground; it was a small but busy place — not that much was being done there, but there were people, and occupations, and human affairs. It was the gathering seat of the assembly of the elders, be-

fore whom the affairs of the ksar are brought for judgment. No one paid us the slightest attention; and after looking at the little stocks of leather and grains and odds and ends, and glancing at the reclining forms that gave color and gravity to the ordinary scene of an Arab square, we entered again on the darkness and somnolence of the winding streets, where there was no sun nor life nor sound, but rather a retreat from all these things, from everything violent in sensation or effort or existence; places of quiet, of cessation, of the melancholy of things. We emerged by a mosque, and near it a cemetery on the edge of the ksar — such a cemetery as they all are, blind, dishevelled heaps of human ruins marked by rough, naked common stones, the desert's epitaph on life, inexpressibly ignominious there in the bright, bare sunlight. We mounted and rode down through gardens, as at first, on a ridge that commanded now one, now another view of the palm and orchard interiors with their dry beds, a strange mixture of barrenness below and fertility above, a rough but pleasant way; and all at once we saw the great palmerai stretching out below us in the plain, like a lake bathing the cliff, a splendidness of dark verdure; black-green and blue-black lights and darks filled it like a sea — cool

to the eye, majestic, immense, magnificent in the flood of the unbounded sunlight, a glory of nature. It was a noble climax to the strange scenes of that morning journey; and soon after we dismounted to make the steep descent on the gray-brown rock of the cliff. The two boys, who had rejoined us, brought down our horses, and we left the half-fallen towers and crumbling walls in their yellow ruin behind us, with the young Arabs still looking, and rode through the hot desert to Beni-Ounif.

This was the mysterious Figuig of old travellers. I had seen it, but it still seemed to me unrealized, though not unreal. A vision of palm-topped garden walls on crumbling mountain paths; of a wind-blown, sunburnt high plateau; of a sun-drenched gully of a street with a strange-windowed, lonely ruin looking down on horses that hang their heads; a maze of darkened passages with a sense of lurking in the shadows, of decay in the silence, of apparition in the rare figures; a closed city of hidden streams and muffled noises, walled orchards and shut houses, sunless ways, yet held in the sun's embrace, the high blue sky, the girdling mountains, the open desert; and with its stern and rocky gardens of the dead, too; a soil and a people made in the image of Islam, impregnated

with it, decrepit with it, full of lassitude and melancholy and doom, mouldering away; yet set amid living fountains, lighted by placid reservoirs where the tall palms sun themselves in the silent waters as in another sky; queen, too, of that dark-green sea of the palmerai, a marvel of nature; and last a vision of long-drawn walls and dismantled towers crumbling in the red sun. It is so I remember it; and it seems rather a mirage of the desert imagination than a reality, a memory.

IV

Beni-Ounif was dull. There was nothing interesting there except the *mise en scène.* It was pleasant to be dining with officers, for they were the principal patrons of the hotel, with whom stars and crosses were as common as watch-guards in New York; and it was stimulating to see the ensigns of the Legion of Honor where they were something more than the international compliment of a ribbon twisted in a black buttonhole and had their heroic meaning, a decoration on an officer's breast. The crosses I saw stood for acts of bravery on the field of battle. There were a few other guests who came and went, a French hunter, a Belgian pro-

fessor who told me of the prehistoric cabinets he had seen farther south, an officer's remarkable collection, and explained to me the geology of the Sahara in brief and interesting lectures. The town itself never lost for me the vacant and makeshift frontier look that it had at first sight; one could walk from end to end of it in a few minutes and come out on the desert, which was monotony petrified. Nothing happened except the arrival and departure of the daily train. Once I met on the edge of the desert the *goum*, a compact small body of native Arab cavalry attached to the French arms, a splendid squad of fighting men; rather heavy and broad-shouldered they looked, wrapped in burnoose and turban, mature men whose life was war, black-bearded, large-eyed, grim — predatory faces; and they were in their proper place, with the naked mountains round and the desert under their horses' feet — a martial scene of the old raiding race. I should not like to see them at work, I thought; their trade is blood, and they looked it — strong, hard, fierce — pitiless men. But usually there was nothing uncommon to my eyes. Once in the café, where we sat over our long glasses of the fortified liquors and tonic drinks of which there is so great a variety in desert towns, some one brought in a beautiful

great dead eagle. It was as if he had been killed in his eyrie to see him there on the desert among the soldiers. We returned to our glasses and our talk: tales of Paris, tales of Odessa in the Revolution, tales of long Algerian rides, encounters, anecdotes of the road — what tales! And other men's tales, too — Anatole France, Pierre Loti, Maurice Le Blanc, Claude Farrère, Pierre Louÿs — all my favorites, for my friend knew them better than I did, and made me new acquaintances "in the realm of gold" that I like best to travel. What happy talk! and the time went by. I went out alone to see the full moon rise over the solemn desert by the reddish hills in the chill air, and fill the great sky with that white flood of radiance that seemed every night more ethereal, more remote from mankind, more an eternal thing; and at the hotel we would meet again to dine late, for my friend being a private soldier, we waited till the officers were gone; and then again the tales and the happy talk, and good night. That was life at Beni-Ounif.

"Would I like to go to the theatre?" I repeated, for it was an unexpected invitation. "You might not think so, but there is a theatre at Beni-Ounif," said my friend. So it appeared that the Legion, among the multitude of things

it did, occasionally gave a performance of private theatricals for its own amusement, and my friend himself was to play that night. It was a beautiful evening with a cold wind. I made my way through the burly military group wrapped in heavy blue cloaks, with here and there a burnoosed spahi or tall tirailleur, and entering the small hall was given a seat in the front row among a few ladies and very young children, two or three civilians, my Belgian acquaintance being one, and half a dozen officers with their swords and crosses. "The tricolor goes well with the palm," I said to myself, as I turned to look at the prettily decorated, not overlighted room, where trophies of the colors alternated with panels of palm-leaves on either side and at the rear, giving to the scene a simple, artistic effect of lightness and gayety with a touch of beauty, especially in the palms. It was characteristically French in refinement, simple elegance, and color; there was nothing elaborate, but it was a charming border to the eye, and no framework could have been so fit for that compact mass of soldiers as was this lightly woven canopy of French flags and the desert palm on the bare walls of that rude hall. But it was the men who held my eyes. The room was packed with soldiers of the Legion;

a few spahis and tirailleurs stood in the rear or at the sides; there was no place left to stand even; and I looked full on their serried faces. My first thought was that I had never seen soldiers before. I never saw such faces — mature, grave, settled, with the look of habitual self-possession of men who command and obey; resolute mouths, immobile features; there was great sadness in their eyes that seemed to look from some point far back, heavy and weary; they had endured much — it was in their pose and bearing and on their countenances; they had ceased to think of life and death — one felt that; but no detail can give the human depth of the impression I felt at the sight — faces into which life had fused all its iron. And there was, too, in the whole mass the sense of physical life, of hardship and hardihood, and of bodily power to do and bear and withstand — the fruit of the desert air, long marches, terrible campaigns in the sands. It was a sight I shall always remember as, humanly, one of the most remarkable I ever looked on.

The Foreign Legion is commonly believed to be made up of broken men who have in some way found themselves eliminated from society, thrown out or left out or gone out of their own will, whether by misfortune, error, disappoint-

ment, or any of the various chances of life, and who have joined the Legion to lose themselves, or because they did not know what else to do with their lives. They come from all European nations and are a cosmopolitan body; and, no doubt, here and there among them is a brilliant talent or a fine quality of daring gone astray; but I imagine a very large proportion of them are simply friendless men who at some moment of abandonment find themselves without resources and without a career, and see in the Legion a last resource. I believe there are great numbers of such friendless men in our civilization. Among the thousands of the Legion there must be, of course, every color of the human past; the losers in life fail for many reasons, and in their defeat become, it may be, incidentally or temporarily, antisocial, or even habitually so, as fate hardens round them with years; but in a great number of cases, I believe, society has defaulted in its moral obligations to them before they defaulted in their moral obligations to their neighbors; and, holding such views, it was perhaps natural that, so far from finding the Legion a band of outcast adventurers and derelicts, I found them very human. I did not read romance or virtue into them. I know the hard conditions of their lives. If there be

an inch of hero in a man, he is hero enough for me. The story of the French occupation of Algeria is largely the story of the Legion. For almost a century it has been one of the most effective units of the French army all over the world; and here in Algeria it has been not only a fighting force of the first order, but also a pioneer force of civilization. The legionaries have built the roads, established the military and civil stations, accomplished the first public works, drained and planted; they have laid the material foundations of the new order; they have not only conquered, but civilized in the material sense, and the labor in that land and climate has been an enormous toil. The reclamation of Africa is a great work, sure to be looked on hereafter as one of the glories of France in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and I thought, as I turned and the band began the overture, what a comment it was on society that in this great work of the reclamation of Africa from barbarism and blood and sodden misery so large a share was borne by this body of friendless men for whom our civilization could find no use and cared not for their fate. What a salvage of human power and capacity, turned to great uses, was there here! and from moment to moment I looked back on that body

of much-enduring men with a keen recurring sense of the infinite patience of mankind under the hard fates of life, of the infinite honor and the infinite pity of it all.

To-night all was light gayety and pleasant jollity. The Legion has one characteristic of a volunteer regiment — its men can do everything, so various are the careers from which it is recruited. Its music is famous, and the orchestra played excellently; and as the first little play began, "Mentons Bleus," the players showed themselves good amateurs. The audience responded quickly to the situations and the dialogue; there were brightened spirits and much laughter, easy, quiet enjoyment and applause. The second part was a series of songs, done by one performer after another, each doing his stunt with verve and the comedy of the variety stage; there was a full dozen of these light-hearted parts. In the intermissions the men stayed in their seats, though about the doorway there would be a little movement and changeful regrouping, but it was an audience that sat in their places ready for more; there was no smoking. The last number of the programme — a small, pretty double sheet, like note-paper, done by some copying process in pale blue, with a sword, rifle, and cap on the

ground before two palms lightly sketched in the lower corner of the title leaf — was another one-act play, "Cher Maître," and was received with a spirit that seemed only to have been whetted by the previous amusement; and when it was over the evening ended in a round of generous applause and a smiling breaking up of the company after their three hours' enjoyment. It was pleasant to have been with the Legion on such a night, and to have shared in its little village *festa*, and I stood by the doorway and watched the men go by as they passed out, till all were gone.

It was midnight. The radiant moon poured down that marvellous white flood on the hollow of the desert where the little town lay low and gleaming, very silent. But I could not rid my mind of the soldiers' lives. I thought of the torrid summer heats here in garrison, of the burning marches yonder in the south, of the days in sterile sands that make the sight of palm and garden a thing of paradise — incredible fatigues, mortal exhaustion, monotony. One cannot know the soldiers' desert life without some experience; but some impression of it may be gained from soldiers' books, such as one that is a favorite companion of mine, "Une Promenade dans le Sahara," by Charles Lagarde,

a lieutenant in the Chasseurs d'Afrique, a thoughtful book, full of artistic feeling, and written with literary grace, the memorial of a soldier with the heart of a poet, who served in South Algeria. In such books one gets the environment, but not the life; one touch with the Legion is worth them all. I fell to sleep for my last slumber at Beni-Ounif, thinking of soldiers' lives, friendless men —

"Somewhere dead far in the waste Soudan."

V

It was a brilliant morning. I went to the edge of the desert and looked off south with the wish to go on that all unknown horizons wake, but which the desert horizon stirs, I think, with more longing insistence, with a greater power of the vague, than any other; for there it lies world-wide, mysterious, unpenetrated, and seems to open a pathway through space itself, like the sea. All true travellers know this feeling, the nostalgia for the "far country" that they will never see; it is an emotion that is like a passion — mystical, and belongs to the deep soul. The desert horizon, like the sea's, at every moment breeds this spell. But as I turned back, with

the sense of the chained foot, my disappointment was tempered by the knowledge that I was to companion my friend, who had been ordered to Tonkin; and I had timed my departure to go with his detachment on its way north. As I went down to the train my Arab boy, with the infinite hopefulness of such attachés, brought me a dead wolf, if by chance I would like it; but I could not add it to my baggage, whereat he was sorrowful, but was comforted. The station presented a lively scene — many soldiers in their white duck trousers and red caps; there was a band; the air was filled with goodbys and laughing salutations; the car windows grew lined with leaning forms and intent faces; the music struck up, high and gallant, and with the last cries and shouts we were off on the line.

It was too short a ride, though the train climbed slowly up the incline, while the desert grew a distant outlook and was shut from view as we made into the winding valleys; and we mounted up through the black defiles, the desolation of the shivered rock, the passes of the toothed ranges, the blocking cliffs and columnar heights — all the petrifaction and fantasy of that naked and severe land; but I was less sensible of its enmity and melancholy than when I came through it alone, though it was harsh

and wild, a *terre perdue*. My friend travelled with his comrades, but we had a long lunch in the train before Aïn-Sefra, and a longer dinner when night began to fall, with tales and talk. Tales of the mutiny of the *batallion d'Afrique* — Othello tales these, fit for fearful ears; tales of night surprises, Arabs crawling by inches for hours in the sands, the sentinels killed without a sound, the first alarm bayonets through the tents, and then the rouse, the square, the victory; tales of the desert madness, the *cafard*. Stirring tales. Talk, too, of home and friends left behind us in the world, of the dead and the living, and of what might yet be for both of us. He told me much of the Legion, for that interested me; but he never complained, and if he caught some unspoken thought on my face from time to time, "*C'est le métier*," he would say, and smile my sympathy away. He was a youth after my own heart; but the night fell darker and darker, and there would be an end. At the last station where it was possible, he came back to me. It was good-by.

TOUGOURT

IV

TOUGOURT

I

IT was a cold dawn in late April at Biskra. The carriage, long and heavy, with three horses abreast, stood at the door. Ali, a sturdy Arab, young but with no look of youth, wound in a gorgeous red sash, sat on the box; and as I settled in my place, Hamet, the guide, followed me gravely and sat down beside me, and at a word from him we were briskly off on the long, uneventful drive to Tougourt, over the desert route of about a hundred and thirty miles southward, to be covered in two days' travel. We were soon beside the sleepy silence of the oasis, and passed the old yellow slope that was once a fortress to guard it on the edge of the sands; we dipped along by little fields of fresh green barley and rose on the steppe of the *bois*, a tangle of low undergrowth, scarcely waist-high, of twisted and almost leafless shrub, that clothes the desert there with its characteristic

dry, rough, tortured, and stunted but hardy vegetation. A few Arabs were to be seen in places cutting it for fire-wood. Camels, too, far away in almost any direction, loomed up, solitary and ungainly as harbor-buoys on a windless morning tide. On all sides lay the sharp black outlines of oasis clumps of palm-trees, distinct, single, solid, each a distant island, with miles to cross before one should land on its unknown shore; and behind us the range of the Aurès seemed to block out the world with the wild beauty of its precipices, which made one cliff of all the north as if to shut out Europe. It was like a wall of the world. All about us was the desert; everything seemed cold and gray and distant, lifeless, in the pallor of the morning; but with every mile the whole world brightened and warmed. Desert air intoxicates me; every breath of it is wine, not so much to my blood or my nerves, but to my whole being of man; and long before we reached Bordj Saada, the first halt, I was keyed to the day. It was a glorious day, cloudless and blue, and drenched with sunshine and radiance and warmth pouring on vast spaces; and the Bordj, a disused military post, a sort of large stockade for refuge and defence, standing solitary on its high ridge, was an old friend and a place of memory for me; there

once I had turned back, and now I was going on. There was excitement in the moment, in the look ahead; and so it was only as we swept round the curve down into the valley of Oued Djedi and crossed its dry channel that I felt myself embarked, as it were, on my first true desert voyage. I had coasted the Sahara for a thousand miles here and there, like a boy in a boat; but now I should be at last out of sight of land.

We were quite happy voyagers, the three of us. Ali, on the box, sang from time to time some cadenced stave, careless as a bird, in a world of his own; indeed the drive was an adventure to him, for, as I afterward found, it was his first going to Tougourt; and had not Hamet, almost as soon as we started, lifting one intent, burning glance straight in my eyes — it was the first time I had really seen him, as a person — told me that I had brought him good luck, for that night his wife had borne him a boy? He was content. A fine figure, too, was Hamet; he answered, as no other guide but one I ever had, to the imagination; he filled my dream of what ought to be. A mature man, rather thick-set, with a skin so bronzed that in the shadow it was black, with the head of a desert sheik, noble, powerful; when he moved he seemed still in repose, so sculptural were all the lines of his figure,

such dignity was in every chance attitude; he seemed more like some distinguished aid to attend me than a guide. His white burnoose fell in large folds, and as he threw it partly over me in the first cool hours, he disclosed some light, white underdress over whose bosom hung low a great gold chain with beads under; a revolver swung in a leather case, rather tightly drawn below his right breast with a strap over the shoulder; white stockings and slippers completed his garb. We talked of trifles, and the conversation was charming, not too fluent — talk of the road; but what I remember is my pleasure in finding again what often seems to me that lost grace of a fine natural demeanor in men. It is of less consequence to me what a man says than is his manner of saying it, and speech is not of the lips only, but of the whole man; and, in my experience, it is the unlearned who are also unspoiled, that, all in all, say things best. And ever as we talked or were silent the horses went on, the brilliant bare line of the Aurès sank slowly down, and round us was the waste of rock with its fitful tangle of tamarack and drin, the sea of sand with its ridged breadths, the near or distant horizon lines as the track rose and fell; and with the hours the panorama of the road began to disclose itself.

The road was really a broad, camel-trodden route on which the carriageway, winding about, found going as best it could; the railway that will some time be had been surveyed along it, and the telegraph-poles that already bore the wire far beyond Tougourt into the desert were seldom far away. On the earlier part of the journey the going was excellent in that dry season. It was not a lonely road, though for long stretches it was solitary. Over the brink of a rise suddenly would spring up a half-dozen human figures, sharp outlines on the blue sky, and a flock would come tumbling after as if clotted about their feet, and there might be a donkey or two; it was a Bedouin family on its northern migration to the summer pasturage. What an isolated fragment of human life it seemed, flotsam tossing about with the seasons, as little related to anything neighborly as seaweed, yet spawning century after century, living on, with the milk of goats, in such a waste; and how infinitely fresh was the simple scene! one or two men, a boy, women, children, and goats tramping in the desert toward water and green food, a type of humanity for ages — and it was such a wretched subsistence! But what a bodily vigor, what a look of independence, what a sense of liberty there was there, too! Now it would

be two or three camels with the canopy in which women ride, with flocks, too, and more men and boys, more warmly clad, with more color and importance — some wealthier head man with his family going the same northward journey. Or, as the carriage crested some ridge, we would see miles ahead a long line creeping on toward us — a trade caravan; and after a while it would pass, the camels pouting in high air, under the loads of balanced boxes or bales laid across them, lumbering dumbly along in the great silence, like convicts, as it always seems to me, from another sphere of existence.

Many creatures give me vividly this impression of having haplessly intruded into a state of being not meant for them. The turtles in the swamps of my boyhood, leaning their sly and protruded heads out of their impossible shells, the fish that have great staring eyes in aquariums, frogs and toads and all centipedal sea creatures, are to me foreigners to life, strays, misbirths, "moving about in worlds not realized," and all grotesque forms of life — even human deformity when it becomes grotesque — wake in me something between amusement and pity that they should be at all. I feel like saying as a guide, wishing to correct a friend of mine, once said: "Monsieur, you are a mistake." But

of all such creatures, the camel fills me with the most profound and incurable despair. He is the most homeless-looking of all creatures. He has been the companion and helpmate of man from the dawn of human life, and our debt to him through uncounted ages and in places where the human lot has been most penurious and desperate is untold; but man has never been able to enlighten him; he looks, on all occasions and under all circumstances, hopelessly bored with existence, unutterably sick of humanity. There is a suicidal mood in animal life, and at times one can see glimpses and intimations of it surely in the eyes of animals; the camel embodies it, like a stare. I wish they were all dead; and when I see their bones in the sand, as I often do, I am glad that they are gone and have left the ribs of their tabernacle of life behind them by the wayside. Every desert traveller writes a little essay on the camel. This is mine. I will not modify it even for the sake of the meharis that come down the route, overtaking us from Biskra; they are the racers that have just competed in the yearly trial of speed from Tougourt — aristocrats of the species; they have a clear gray tone and slender delicacies of flank and skin; all day they will be speeding ahead and dropping behind us; the desert is their cloth of

gold and they its chivalry — splendid beasts they are, as native to this blown empire of the sand and the sun and the free air as a bird to the sky — and they lift their blunt noses over it with unconquerable contempt. It is amazing how the creature, supercilious or abject, refuses to be comforted. There is no link between him and man. If you seek a type for the irreconcilable, find it in the camel.

It is said that one meets his enemy in every place, and every traveller experiences these surprising encounters that prove the smallness of the world; but I better the proverb, for it is a friend I meet in the most solitary places. On the loneliest road of Greece a passing traveller called out my name; in the high passes of Algiers I came face to face with a schoolmate; and, however repeated, the experience never loses its surprise. Surely I had seen that gaunt figure pressing up on a stout mule from the head of the fresh trade caravan that was just approaching; that face, like a bird of prey, that predatory nose before the high forehead and bold eyes — yes, it was Yussef, my guide of years ago, with welcome all over his countenance and quick salutations to his old companion. He was a caravan man now, for the nonce, and coming up from the Souf. How natural it

was to meet on the desert, with the brief words that resumed the years and abolished the time that had sped away and renewed the eternal now. But we must follow the meharis, slim forms on the horizon ahead, and we went on to overtake them at Aïn Chegga, a mere stopping place, where there was on one side of the way a sort of desert farm, and a relay of horses waiting for us, and on the other a small, lonesome building by itself where we could lunch from our own stores. The sun was hot now and the shade and rest grateful; but we had a long way to go. With thoughtless generosity we gave our fragments of bread to some adjacent boys, and started off rapidly with the fresh horses on the great plain.

The road was lonelier than in the morning hours; the solitude began to make itself felt, the silence of the heat, the encompassment of the rolling distances, the splendor of the sky. There was hardly any life except the occasional shrub, the drin. I saw a falcon once, and once a raven; but we were alone, as if on the sea. Then the Sahara began to give up its bliss — the unspeakable thing — the inner calm, the sense of repose, of relief, the feeling of separation from life, the falling away of the burden, the freedom from it all in the freedom of those blue and silent dis-

tances over sandy and rock-paved tracts, full of the sun. How quiet it was, how large, and what a sense of effortless elemental power — of nature in her pure and lifeless being! It is easy to think on the desert, thought is there so near to fact — a still fresh imprint in consciousness; thought and being are hardly separate there; and there nature seems to me more truly felt in her naked essence, lifeless, for life to her is but an incident, a detail, uncared for, unessential. She does but incline her poles and it is gone. Taken in the millennial æons of her existence, it is a lifeless universe that is, and on the desert it seems so. This is the spectacle of power where man is not — like the sea, like the vault of heaven, like all that is infinite. What a repose it is to behold it, to feel it, to know it — this elimination, not only of humanity, but of life, from things! The desert — it is the truth. How golden is the sunlight, how majestic the immobile earth, how glorious the reach of it — this infinite! And one falls asleep in it, cradled and fascinated and careless, flooded slowly by that peace which pours in upon the spirit to lull and strengthen and quiet it, and to revive it changed and more in nature's image, purged — so it seems — of its too human past.

It was late in the afternoon. Hamet roused

himself as we passed down to Oued Itel and crossed its dry bed, and Ali ceased from his vagrant music as the horses breasted the slope beyond. We came out on a high ridge. It was a magnificent view. The long valley of the great chotts lay below us transversely, like a vast river bottom; far off to the northeast glittered, pale and white, Chott Melrir, like a sea of salt, and before us Chott Merouan stretched across like a floor, streaked with blotches of saltpetre and dark stains of soil. The scene made the impression on me of immense flats at a dead low tide, reaching on the left into distances without a sea. It was a scene of desolation, of unspeakable barrenness, of the waste world; its dull, white lights were infinitely fantastic on the grays and the blacks, and the lights in the sky were cold; the solitude of it was complete; but its great extent, its emptiness, its enclosing walls of shadow in the falling day crinkling the whole upper plane of the endless landscape round its blanching hollows and horizontal vistas below, stamped it indelibly on my eyes. I was not prepared for it; it was an enlargement, a new aspect of the world. This was the southwestern end of the chain of chotts, or salt wastes, that lie mostly below sea-level and are the dried-up bed of the ancient inland arm of the sea that

washed this valley in some distant age; they stretch northeasterly and touch the Mediterranean near Gabès and the suggestion is constantly made that the sea be let into them again by a canal, thus flooding and transforming this part of the Sahara. It may some time be done; but there is some doubt about the lay of the levels and whether such an engineering feat would not result merely in stagnant waters. Meanwhile it is a vast barren basin, saline, and in the wet season dangerous with quicksands, unsafe ground, a morass of death for man and beast. The ridge where I stood commanded a long view of this sterile and melancholy waste; but I did not feel it to be sad; I only felt it to be; it had such grandeur.

We went down by a rough descent and began the crossing of the chott before us, Merouan, on its westerly edge. The road ran on flat ground, often wet and thick with a coating of black mud, and there was the smell of saltpetre in the air; the view on either side was merely desolate, night was falling, it began to be chill; and by the time we reached the farther side the stars came out. It was a darkened scene when we rode into the first oasis of young palms, without inhabitants, which belonged to some French company. It was full night when we emerged

again on the sands; a splendor of stars was over us and utter solitude around; it was long since we had seen any one, and as the second oasis came into view it looked like a low black island cliff on the sea, and as deserted. We drove into its shadows by a broad road like an avenue, with the motionless palms thick on either side, as in a park; there was no sign or sound of life. It was like night in a forest, heavy with darkness and silence, except where the stars made a track above and our lights threw a pale gleam about. This oasis, which was large, also seemed uninhabited; and we passed through it on the straight road which was cut by other crossing roads, and came out on the desert by the telegraph-poles. The going was through heavy sand, which after a mile or two was heavier; our hubs were now in drifts of it. Hamet took the lights and explored to find tracks of wheels, and the horses drew us with difficulty into what seemed a route; in ten minutes it was impracticable. We crossed with much bumping and careening to the other side of the telegraph-poles, and that was no better; forward and back and sidelong, with much inspection of the ground, we plied the search; we were off the route.

We drove back to the oasis thinking we had missed the right way out, and on its edge turned

at right angles down a good road; at the corner we found ourselves in the dunes — there was no semblance of a route. We returned to the centre of the silent palm grove, where there were branching ways, and taking another track were blocked by a ditch, and avoiding that, coasting another and ruder side of the grove, again at the upper corner of the oasis struck the impassable; so we went back to our starting-place. Hamet took the lanterns and gathered up his revolver and set out apparently to find the guardian, if there was one. It was then Ali told me he had never been to Tougourt before; Hamet was so experienced a guide that it was thought a good opportunity to break in a new driver. These French oases across the old route, with their new roads, were confusing; and Hamet had not been down to Tougourt of late. The silence of the grove was great, not wholly unbroken now: there were animal cries, insect buzzings, hootings, noises of a wood, and every sound was intensified in the deep quiet, the strange surroundings. It was very late. We had spent hours in our slow progress wandering about in the sands and the grove in the uncertain light. Hamet was gone quite a long time, but at last we saw his waving lantern in the wide dark avenue and drove toward him. He got

in, said something to Ali, and off we went on our original track, but turned sharply to the right before issuing from the wood, down a broad way; we were soon skirting the western edge of the oasis; branches brushed the carriage; the ruts grew deep, the track grew narrow, the carriage careened; we got out, the wheels half in the ditch, horses backing. Hamet threw up his hands. It was midnight. We would camp where we were. The route was lost, whatever might be our state; and I did not wonder, for as nearly as I could judge we were then heading north by east, if I knew the pole-star. We were on the only corner of the oasis we had not hitherto visited; the spot had one recommendation for a camp — it was a very out-of-the-way place. The horses were taken out, and each of us disposed himself for the night according to his fancy. It was intensely cold, and I rolled myself in my rugs and sweaters and curled up on the carriage seat and at once fell fast asleep.

An hour later I awoke, and unwinding myself got out. It was night on the desert. Ali was asleep on the box, upright, with his chin against his breast. Hamet lay in his burnoose in the sand some little distance away. The horses stood in some low brush near the ditch. The

palm grove, impenetrably black, stood behind, edging the long, low line of the sky; there was a chorus of frogs monotonously chanting; and before me to the west was the vague of the sands, with indistinguishable lines and obscure hillocks, overlaid with darkness. Only the sky gave distance to the silent solitude — such a sky as one does not see elsewhere, magnificent with multitudes of stars, bright and lucid, or fine and innumerable, melting into nebulous clouds and milky tracts, sparkling and brilliant in that keen, clear, cloudless cold, all the horizon round. I was alone, and I was glad. It was a wonderful moment and scene. Hamet stirred in his place, and I went back to my post and slept soundly and well.

II

I WOKE at the first streak of dawn. Two beautiful morning stars still hung, large and liquid, in the fading night, but the growing pallor of daybreak already disclosed the wild and desolate spot where we had fortunately stopped. Drifts of trackless sand stretched interminably before us; the young palms showed low and forlorn in the gray air; the scanty brush by the ditch was starved and miserable;

everything had a meagre, chill, abandoned look. As soon as it was light we reversed our course, and re-entering the oasis hailed a well-hidden group of buildings with a koubba that Hamet seemed to have discovered the night before. An old Arab gave us our bearings. We were seventeen kilometres short of Mraïer, the oasis which we should have reached; and now, making the right turn-off, we saw in another direction over the sands the black line of palms toward which we had gone astray. We soon covered the distance to Mraïer, which was a large oasis with a considerable village and a caravanserai whose gates were crowded with camels; here we got a very welcome breakfast, but we did not linger, and were quickly out again on the desert on the long day's ride before us.

Since we passed the chott we were in the valley of Oued Rir, along which is strewn a chain of oases like a necklace as far as to Tougourt and beyond. We were really on the crust of what has been well called a subterranean Nile, formed by the converging flow of two Saharan rivers, Oued Igharghar and Oued Mya, whose underground bed is pierced by wells and the waters gathered and distributed to feed the oases. There are now forty-six of these palm gardens that lie at a distance of a few

miles, one from another, spotting the arid sands with their black-green isles of solid verdure, making a fantastic and beautiful landscape of the rolling plain of moving sands, with many heights and depressions, stretching with desert breadth on and on under the uninterrupted blue of the glowing sky. The district has long been a little realm by itself, sustaining with much toil the meagre life of its people and periodically invaded and subdued by the great passing kingdoms of the north. Its prosperity, however, really dates from the French occupation. At that time the oases were dying out under the invasion of the unresting sands that slowly were burying them up. The French almost at once with their superior skill sank artesian wells, and the new flood of water brought immediate change. The number of the inhabitants has doubled; the product of dates, which are of the best quality, has increased many-fold; and new oases of great extent and value have been planted by French companies. This is one of the great works of public beneficence accomplished by France for the native population; and evidence of prosperity was to be seen on every hand all the way.

The route for the most part was sandy with occasional stretches of rock, often a beautifully

colored quartz, whose brilliant and strange veins harmonized well with the deep-toned landscape; but the eye wandered off to the horizon and drifts of sand, as the heavens began to fill with light and the spaces grew brilliant; in that vacancy and breadth every detail grew strangely important and interesting; a single palm, a far glimmer of salt, a herd of goats would hold the eye, and, as the day grew on, the deceptive atmosphere gave a fresh touch of the fantastic, playing with the lines and forms of objects. We passed from Mraïer, leaving these island oases on the horizon as the route threaded its way more or less remote from them, and at intervals we would touch one — a palm grove on the right, and the village by itself on higher dry ground to the left. Two of these villages, of considerable size, were entirely new, having been built within two years; they were constructed of the sun-dried mud commonly used, but they did not have the dilapidated look of the ksar; they were clean and fresh, a new home for the people who had abandoned the old, unhealthy site that they had formerly occupied, and had made a new town for themselves; and Hamet, who told me this, said other villages had done the same, and he seemed proud of their enterprise and prosperity.

We went on now through heavy sand at times — and always there was the broad prospect, the gray and brown ribbed distance, the blue glow — a universal light, a boundless freedom, the desert solitude of the dry, soft air. "*C'est le vrai Sahara,*" said Hamet, content. For myself I could not free my senses of the previous day's impression of the great chotts as of the shore of a world, and the landscape continued to have a prevailing marine character. I do not mean that the desert was like the ocean; it was not. But the outlooks, the levels, the sand-colored and blue-bathed spaces were like scenes by the seashore; only there was no sea there. The affluence of light, the shadowless brilliancy, the silences, the absence of humanity and human things as again and again they dropped from us and ceased to be, were ocean traits; but there was no sea — only the wind sculpture of the sands, beautifully mottled and printed, and delicately modulated by the wind's breath, only a blue distance, an island horizon. Even the birds — there were many larks to-day — seemed sea-birds, so lonesomely flying. But there was never any sea. It was the kingdom of the sands.

Here, not far from the route, I saw what was meant by the invasion of the sand. The oasis

on its farther side toward the desert was half blown over with the white drifts of it that made in like a tide; the trunks of the palms were buried to a third of their height in it; the whole garden was bedded with it, and as we drew away from the place, looking back, the little oasis with its bare palm stems resembled a wreck driving in the sea of sands. Elsewhere I saw the barriers, fences of palm leaves and fagots, raised against the encroaching dunes, where the sand was packed against them like high snow-drifts. The sand grew heavier now, and as we came to Ourlana, about which palmerais lay clustering in all directions, the horses could hardly drag through the deep, loose mass up to the low building and enclosure where was our noon stopping place. The resources of the house were scanty: only an omelet, but an excellent one, and coffee; bread, too, and I had wine. The family, a small one with boy and girl, whom chocolate soon won to my side, was pleasant, and there was a welcome feeling of human society about the incident; but as I lit a cigarette and watched the fresh horses put in — for here we found our second relay that had been sent ahead some days before — I saw that, if the population seemed scanty, it was not for any lack of numbers. A short distance beyond our enclosure, and on a

line with it, in the same bare sandy waste, stood another long building with a great dome, evidently a government structure, and at right angles to it before the door was forming a long line of young children; it was the village school — these were the native boys marching in to the afternoon session, for all the world like an American school at home. I had not expected to see that on the Sahara. I photographed it at once — a striking token of modern civilization; and I saw no happier sight than those playful little Arabs going to school.

We dipped ahead into the oasis by the long lines of palms lifting their bare stems far overhead and fretting the sky with their decorative border of tufts. Here and there were fruit trees, and occasionally vegetables beneath, but as a rule there were only the palms rising from bare earth, cut by ditches in which flowed the water; there was no orchard or garden character to the soil, only a barren underground, but all above was forest silence and the beauty of tall trees. It was spring, and the trees had begun to put out their great spikes and plumes of white blossoms in places, and the air was warm and soft. A palm fascinates me with the beauty of its formal lines; where two or three are gathered together they make a picture; a single one in the distance

gives composition to a whole landscape. This was, notwithstanding the interludes of the oases, a continuously desert ride, and I remember it mostly for its beauty of color and line, and a strange intensity and aloofness of the beauty; there was nothing human in it. It seemed to live by its own glow in a world that had never known man; the scene of some other planet where he had never been. There was, too, over all the monotony and immobility of things, a film of changefulness, a waver of surface, a shifting of lights and planes; it was full of the fascination of horizons, the elusiveness of far objects, and the feeling of endlessness in it, like the sky, was a deep chord never lost. It was beyond Ourlana that I noticed to the southwest, a mile or two away, three or four detached palms by a lake; their tall stems leaned through the transparent air above a low bank over a liquid, mirror-like belt of quiet water, a perfect oriental scene. It was my first mirage; and two or three times more I saw it that afternoon — the perfect symbol of all the illusion of life. How beautiful it was, how was its beauty enhanced framed there in the waste world, how after a while it melted away!

Oasis after oasis dropped from us on the left and the right, and in the late afternoon we

were climbing a sharp rise through the deepest sand we had yet encountered, so that we all got out and walked to relieve the horses, and ourselves toiled up the slope; and soon from the ridge we saw a broad panorama like that of the day before; but instead of that salt desolation, here the eye surveyed an endless lowland through which ahead ran a long, dark cluster of oases, one beyond another, like an archipelago; and Hamet, pointing to one far beyond all, on the very edge of the horizon, said: "Tougourt." We descended to the valley, passing a lonely old gray mosque, or koubba, of some desert saint by the way — very solemn and impressive it was in the failing light, far from men; and we rolled on for miles over land like a floor, as on a Western prairie; and the stars came out; and at intervals a dark grove went by; and we were again in the sands; and another grove loomed up with its look of a black low island, and we passed on beside it. I thought each, as it came in view, was our goal, but we kept steadily on. It was nigh ten o'clock when we saw, some miles away, the two great lights, like low harbor lights, that are the lights of the gate of Tougourt. Ali was perceptibly relieved when we made sure of them; for they were unmistakable at last.

Then, in that last half-hour, I witnessed a strange phenomenon. The whole sky was powdered with stars; I had never seen such a myriad glimmer and glow, thickening, filling the heavenly spaces, innumerable; and all at once they seemed to interlink, great and small, with rays passing between them, and while they shone in their places, infinite in multitude, light fell from them in long lines, like falling rain, down the whole concave of night from the zenith to the horizon on every side. It was a Niagara of stars. The celestial dome without a break was sheeted with the starry rain, pouring down the hollow sphere of darkness, from the apex to the desert rims. No words can describe that sight, as a mere vision; still less can they tell its mystical effect at the moment. It was like beholding a miracle. And it was not momentary; for half an hour, as we drove over the dark level, obscure, silent, lonely, I was arched in and shadowed by that ceaseless, starry rain on all sides round; and as we passed the great twin lights of the gates, and entered Tougourt, and drew up in the dim and solitary square, it was still falling.

III

I EMERGED the next morning from the arcaded entrance of the hotel, which was one of a continuous line of low buildings making the business side of the public square, and glancing up I saw a great dog looking down on me from the flat roof. There was little other sign of life. The square was a large, irregular space which seemed the more extensive owing to the low level of the adjoining buildings over which rose the massive tower of the kasbah close at hand on the right and, diagonally across, the high dome of the French Bureau, with its arcaded front beneath, filling that eastern side. A fountain stood in the midst of the bare space, and beyond it was a charming little park of trees; and still farther the white gleam of the barracks, through the green and on either side, closed the vista to the south. The Moresque architecture, which the French affect in the desert, with its white lights and open structure, gave a pleasing amplitude to the scene; and the same style was taken up by the main street straight down my left, whose line was edged by a long arcade with low, round arches, and the view lost itself beyond in the market square

with thick tufts of palms fringing the sky. A few burnoosed figures were scattered here and there.

Hamet joined me at once, still content; he held in his hand a telegram from his new boy, or those who could interpret for him. We turned at once to the near corner by the kasbah, where was the entrance to the old town and the mosque — a precinct of covered streets, narrow, tortuous ways, with blank walls, dim light. There were few passers-by; occasionally there was a glimpse of some human scene; but the general effect, though the houses were often well built, was dingy, poor, and mean, as such an obscure warren of streets must seem to us, and there was nothing here of the picturesque gloom and threatening mystery of Figuig. I remember it as a desert hive of the human swarm; it was a new, strange, dark mode of man's animal existence. This was a typical desert town, an old capital of the caravans. It had been thus for ages; and my feeling, as I wandered about, was less that of the life than of its everlastingness.

We went back to the mosque and climbed the minaret. It was a welcome change to step out on the balcony into the flood of azure. The true Sahara stretched round us — the roll

of the white sands, motion in immobility; and all about, as far as one could see, the dark palm islands in the foreground and on every horizon. The terrace roofs of the old town lay dark under our feet; off there to the west in the sand were the tombs of its fifty kings; eastward the palm gardens, bordering and overflowing into the new quarter with its modern buildings, lifted their fronds; and near at hand the tower of the kasbah, and here and there a white-domed koubba, rose in the dreaming air; and the streets with their life were spread beneath. Tougourt, at the confluence of the underground streams, is the natural capital of the Rir country, a commanding point; on the north and west it is walled against the inroad of the sands; south and east is a more smiling scene, but the white sand lies everywhere between, like roads of the sea; it is the queen of the oases, and one understood in that sparkling air why it was called a jewel of the desert. I went down to the gardens, where there were fruit trees and vegetables among the palms, but for the most part there was as usual only the barren surface of earth, fed with little canals and crossed by narrow, raised footways, over which sprang the fan-shaped or circular tufts of swarded green. On that side, too, was a native village — dreary

walls of sun-dried earth with open ways; they seemed merely a new form of the naked ground shaped perpendicularly and squared — windowless, sealed, forlorn. I entered one or two. Indeed, I went everywhere that morning, for the distances were short.

In the afternoon I sat down by a table near a café in the market square, and I remained there for hours over my coffee, watching the scene. All Arab markets are much alike, but this was prettily framed. On my right a palm grove rose over a low wall; on the left, across the broad space, the low line of shops, with a glistening koubba dome in their midst, broke the blue sky; and all between, in front, was the market-place. In the foreground were a few raised booths, or tables, and at the near end by a group of three or four palms was a butcher's stock in trade, the carcasses hanging on the limbs of a dead tree. Farther off to the left squatted a half-dozen Bedouins round little fagots of brushwood spread on the ground, and beyond them a group of animals huddled; in the centre, on the earth, one behind another into the distance, were many little squares and heaps of country goods, each with its guardian group as at a fair — vegetables, grains, cloths, slippers, ropes, caps, utensils, that together

measured the scale of the simple wants of the desert. The place, though not crowded, was well filled with an ever-moving and changing throng, gathering into groups here and there — turbaned people of every tint and costume, young and old, poor and prosperous, picturesque alike in their bright colors or worn rags; but the white or brown flowing garments predominated. There were Arab and Berber faces of purer race; but in the people at large there was a strong negroid character, showing the deeper infusion of negro blood which one notices as he goes south of the Atlas. All the afternoon the quiet but interested crowd swarmed about; and round me at the close tables were soldiers and Arabs who seemed of a more prosperous class, drinking and talking, playing at cards, chess, and dominos, and some were old and grave and silent. At our table there was always one or two, who came and went, to whom Hamet would perhaps present me, a thin-featured cadi, a burly merchant, and we talked a little; but I left the talk to them and watched the scene and from time to time snapped my camera. A caravan came down the street, with great boxes strapped on the camels, and I thought the first two would sweep me, camera, table, and all, out of the way; but the long

line got by at last, ungainly beasts with their pawing necks and sardonic mouths. At Tougourt one was always meeting a caravan. As I stood, at a later hour, in a lonely corner by the wall outside the gates, one was just kneeling down on the great sweep of the sand-hill to camp in the melancholy light that was falling from the darkening sky — a sombre scene; and when I came out of the hotel at night I found another sleeping, humped and shadowy, on the public square. The camel was as omnipresent as the palm, and belonged to the same dunes and sky; and as I sat watching there through the uneventful and unhurried hours, the market-place was a microcosm of the desert world.

IV

I SPENT the evening in the *Café Maure* of the Ouled-Naïls. They are *la femme* of the Sahara, daughters of a tribe whose centre is at Djelfa, not far from Laghouat, leagues away to the west, and thence they are dispersed through the desert, adept dancing-girls who perform in cafés; and in that primitive society, it is said, no reproach attaches to their mode of life, which yields them a dowry and brings them at last a husband. The custom is not peculiar

to the Sahara; I have read of its existence in Japan and in the north of Scotland in the eighteenth century. I had met with them before, and was familiar with their figures, but always in a tourist atmosphere; here they were on their own soil, and *au naturel*, and I expected a different impression.

The room was rather large, with the furnace and the utensils for coffee in the corner near the entrance; four or five musicians, on a raised platform, were discoursing their shrill barbarian art, but it pleases me with its plaintive intensity and rapid crescendos, in its savage surroundings; a bench went round the wall, and there were tables, at one of which Hamet and I sat down, and coffee was brought. There were not many in the room — a sprinkling of soldiers, mostly in the blue of the tirailleurs, Arabs, old and gray-bearded, or younger and stalwart like Ali, whom I had lost sight of and now found here, much more attractive than I had thought possible, with a desert rose in his mouth and a handsome comrade. A few women with the high head-dress and heavy clothes they wear were scattered about. Close behind me, and to my left, was a wide entrance to the dark shadows of the half-lighted court whose cell-like rooms I had inspected in the morning, and

men and women were passing in and out, singly and in groups, all the evening. For a while there was no dancing — only the music; but at some sign or call a full-grown woman, who seemed large and heavy, began the slow cadence and sway of the dance. I had often seen the performance, but never in such a setting; at Biskra and in the north it is a show; here it was a life. She finished, and I beckoned to a young slip of a girl standing near. She came, leaning her dark hands on the table, with those unthinking eyes that are so wandering and unconcerned until they fill with that liquid, superficial light which in the south is so like a caress. I offered her my cigarettes, and she smiled, and permitted me to examine the bracelets on her arms and the silver ornaments that hung from her few necklaces; she was simply dressed and not overornamented; she was probably poor in such riches; there was no necklace of golden louis that one sometimes sees; but there were bracelets on her ankles, and she wore the head-dress, with heavy, twisted braids of hair. A blue star was tattooed on her forehead, and her features were small but fine, with firm lines and rounded cheek and chin; she was too young to be handsome, but she was pretty for her type and she had the pleasant charm that youth gives to the children

of every tint and race. She stood by us a while with a little talk, and as the music began she drew back and danced before us; and if she had less muscular power and vivacity than the previous dancer, she had more grace in her slighter motions. She used her handkerchief as a background to pose her head and profile her features and form; and all through the dance she shot her vivid glances, that had an elasticity and verve of steel, at me. She came back to take our applause and thanks, and talked with Hamet," for her simple French phrases were exhausted; there was nothing meretricious in her demeanor, rather an extraordinary simplicity and naturalness of behavior; she seemed a thing of nature. The room began to fill now; three women were dancing; and she went over to the bench by the wall opposite, and I noticed a young boy of eight or ten years ran to sit by her and made up to her like a little brother. There were three or four such young boys there.

The scene was now at its full value as a picture; not that there was any throng or excitement, and to a European eye it might seem only dull, provincial, rude; the rather feebly lighted room was obscure in the corners and the walls were naked; the furnace corner, however, was full of dark movement, the sharp music broke

out afresh, the dance was almost sombre in its monotony, seen mechanically and without any apparent interest by the Arabs, wrinkled and grizzled, banked together or leaning immobile on the bench by the wall; and the cavernous shadow of the court behind me made a fine background to the figures or groups that disappeared or emerged, or sometimes stood stationary there in the semi-obscurity. To my color and shadow loving eye it was an interesting scene; and its rudeness enhanced its quality. I noticed many a slight thing: a tall negro stalked along the opposite wall with a handful of candles which he offered to a woman and found no welcome for, and he went away apparently exceeding sorrowful. And I sat there long in the midst of it, thinking of striped tents by the city wall in the sand near the graves; of streets in the Orient and the north where the women sit by the door-post like idols; and especially reconstructing in imagination the scenes of a romance by an Arab, which I had lately read, depicting the life of an Ouled-Naïl along these very routes where I had been passing, a book full of desert truth — "Khadra," it is called. Toward ten o'clock we rose to go, and I caught the eye of the young girl I had talked with, and had a smile for good-by.

V

The horses stood at the door early the next morning for a drive to Temacin, some thirteen kilometres south. We were soon out of town, travelling beside an oasis on the left and going in the open desert; a boy joined us from the oasis and excitedly struggled to keep up with the carriage, no difficult task, for the route was heavy with sand; two other boys on donkeys ahead were having a race; and the route had always some touches of travel. The openness of the view was boundless, and I had not seen finer sands, stretching away in long rolls and ridges, and mounded into splendid dunes, with palms here and there for horizon lines. There were always groups and little strings of camels, isolated but living, in the expanse over which the eye roamed; we passed from time to time within view of clumps of lost palms, little oases buried and left in the sands, half-submerged, derelicts; now there were Bedouin tents, low, striped shelters, by ones or twos, pitched on the sterile waste, looking infinitely solitary, at a distance from a small village on a ridge, that itself seemed a heap of ruined and ribbed walls left abandoned. The morning was hot, the

sun beat down, and every line and tracery of the wind was visible on the sand. The surface of the dunes was beautiful — light and full of the spirit of fantasy; the modulation was exquisite, ribbed and fretted, furrowed in lines and touched all over with little disks and curves, like the imprint of small shells; and their mottled and wavy surfaces broke the monotony of the vast slopes and dunes like an infinite enamelling of nature. It was the land of the blue distance, the simple in the grand, the apotheosis of paucity in the means, of poverty in the substance, elemental, abstract, superb: the glory of the desert. I never so felt it as on that morning. I watched the slender, film-like, far-off minaret of Temacin take body and height as we drew nearer and nearer, and saw plainly and distinctly at last the boldly perched, irregular oblong of walls and roofs that topped a rising ridge of the sands, with its minaret like a dark, mediæval tower standing in heaven with a lance-like solitude. Its top was bordered with a broad frieze of colored tiles and capped with a pyramidal head or balcony pierced with slim Moorish arches. There were men working under the wall; but the town looked marvellously silent and alone, dark and withdrawn, like an impenetrable earthen ruin, incommu-

nicable; it rose as if made of the earth itself, with the dilapidation of old earthworks, forbidding and melancholy, with no touch of life except the gleam of its tiled minaret; in all that sun it seemed sunless — ruinous, decadent, infinitely old. Soon after we passed another heap of earth walls on a sand-mound, a small village, and came almost at once to Tamelhat, the zaouia, which we had set out to see.

High walls surrounded the enclosure, which was extensive. Tamelhat is a holy village, a chief seat of the religious order of the Tidjania and daughter of the mother zaouia at Aïn Madhi, near Laghouat, with which it shares the devotion of this important brotherhood, one of the most influential of the Moslem associations in North Africa. The zaouia is a sort of monastery or abbey; but I was not prepared to find it so large an establishment. We left the carriage at the gate and passed in to a second gate, and I was struck by the ornamental work and texts on them and on the walls. A straight avenue led down to an open space where the mosque stood on the right side of the street as we turned sharply upon it. Three square windows set in little ornamented arches in the centre broke the broad white space of the wall, and there were other windows irregularly placed. A

little to one side was a heavy door, with a double row of faience set over its square top and descending on beautiful onyx pillars. An octagonal dome, tipped with a shaft of three golden balls, completed the building above. It was a pretty exterior with a touch of art in the line of windows, and as I passed into the interior by the lovely onyx columns it seemed like a reminiscence, almost a renaissance, to find before my gaze the familiar blue and green tiles, plaques of wrought plaster in arabesque, pretty bits of faience adornment — forms of the ornament and color so delightful to me. The interior was roomy, with good spaces, and lofty above; in the main fore part a palanquin was in one corner, and a few tombs were placed here and there; but the shrine, the tomb of the Marabout who founded the zaouia, stood in the space to the left, directly under the dome, as in a chapel. It was heavily covered with stuffs, as usual, and overhung with many banners; a grill ran round it, and outside of that a wooden rail; the tomb also bore Arabian texts. The whole effect, notwithstanding the bareness, the few elements, the uncostly materials, had the grand simplicity of the Moslem faith; it was impressive — imposing to a simple soul; but, beyond the restful sense of the neighborhood of beautiful and sacred

things in that far and desert solitude, what pleased me most and the feature I carried away to be my memory of it was the ample lights in the cool spaces by the open windows above the tomb toward the street, where the birds were continually fluttering in and out, unfrightened and undisturbed, as if this was their quiet home.

I thanked the Arab sacristan who stood looking at me with old and tranquil eyes, and we went out and walked up the street, which seemed like a long cloister. There were grilled windows on the well-built walls at intervals; a few men sat here and there on benches along the way; it seemed a place of peace. The street, which was quite long and straight, ended in a large court near which was the dwelling of the Marabout. Hamet asked me if I would like to see him, and I gladly assented. After a brief interval an Arab came to us, to whom I gave my coat and what things I was carrying; and leaving them below, he guided us up an irregular stairway, as in an old house, and took us into a rather large, high room, plainly plastered and bare. The desert saint — such he was — was seated on the floor in the middle of one side by the wall on a rug; he was old and large, white-bearded, with a heavy look, as if he were used to much repose and was aged. He gave me his hand as I

stooped down to him, and after a word or two invited me to be seated at a plain table before him in the middle of the room; and attendants silently brought food. There was already in the room the caïd of Temacin, a stout and prosperous-looking Arab, to whom Hamet presented me, and the three of us sat down to what turned out to be a hearty breakfast. Two or three other tall Arabs, apparently belonging to the family, sat by the wall to my left, as I faced the Marabout, and at a doorway in the corner on the right stood a group of different ages, younger, with one or two boys, intelligent and bright-eyed. The caïd and myself talked in low tones, and no one else spoke, except from time to time the Marabout gave some direction to the attendants, apparently of a hospitable nature, as each time it resulted in fresh dishes. There was pastry that resembled rolls, and after a few moments, served in another form, hot with sugar, it resembled pancakes, but I dare say it was something quite different, and the Marabout urged it upon me; there was another combination that reminded me distantly of doughnuts, with which the hot food ended; but there was a dessert of French cakes, almonds, and a dried aromatic kernel like peas, and much to my surprise there were oranges that must have come on

camel-back from Biskra. There was coffee, too, with a curious pot and sugar-bowl, and the whole service was excellent, the attendants kindly and pressing, though very quiet. It appeared afterward that no one ever sees the saint eat; his food is brought and left, and he takes what he likes alone. I observed him through the meal, and occasionally he addressed a sentence of inquiry or interest to us. The impression he made on me was one of great indolence, as if he had never done anything for himself, and also of what I can only describe as a somnolent temperament, heavy and rousing himself at times; but it may have been only age. The profound silence and atmosphere of awed respect were remarkable; the few words spoken were hardly above a whisper, and the caïd and I used low tones. It was a hospitable and generous breakfast, however, and the manner of it wholly pleasant and friendly; and as I again took the old Marabout's large, soft hand, and expressed my pleasure and thanks for having been thus received, he seemed to me very cordial and kind; and for my part I was glad that I had found the unusual experience of breakfasting with a saint so agreeable. The caïd and I parted below, and I walked back through the tranquil street and by the mosque with the bird-haunted windows

and the onyx portal, well pleased with my morning in such a place of peace and good-will.

We drove back through the hot horizons of a burning noon; by sombre Temacin with its far-seen tower, old watcher of the desert; by the distant western oasis with its two gleaming koubbas, that seemed to dissolve between the sands and the blue; by the Bedouin tents crouched in the long drifts below the brow of the earthen ruin whose walls gaped on the hill with fissure and breach. We passed a bevy of bright-colored Bedouin women hurrying in their finery to some Marabout to pray. The long slopes and mounded dunes had not lost that wonderful enamel of the breath of the wind. All nature seemed to stretch out in the glory of the heat. It was spring on the desert; it was a dreaming world. "*Le vrai Sahara*," said Hamet, half to himself. And slowly over the palmy plain, beyond the lost oasis, the tower and minaret of Tougourt, slim lines on the sky, grew distinct in their turn, and solid, and near, and we drove in through the garden green as over a threshold of verdure. It was a great ride.

The day ended lazily. I had the pleasure of a few courteous words with the agha of Tougourt, to add to my hospitable distinctions. "He is an Arabian prince," said Hamet proudly,

as we walked away. Along the arcade I saw a Jew seated cross-legged, with his back to the jamb of his shop; he held a heavy folio volume on his lap and seemed to peruse it with grave attention; that was the only time I ever saw a native reading a book in North Africa, and I looked curiously at the fine venerable face. The boys were playing leap-frog before the hotel as I came back from my walk; they had thrown off their haiks, or jackets, or whatever their upper garment might be. How they played! with what strong, young sinews and vivacity of rivalry and happiness! though the children of the street seemed often poor, destitute, and with faces of want. I photographed two of these Bedouin boys, with whom I had made friends. In the evening I sat outside and watched the camp-fires burning by the camels in the square. I thought of the massacring of the French garrison here forty years ago, and of the protests that a military interpreter, Fernand Philippe, records from the lips of the soldiers when a year or two later the government contemplated withdrawing from this advanced desert post. It was a place of home-sickness, of fever, and of utter isolation; but the soldiers wished to stay — withdraw? never! — and all this peace and prosperity that I had witnessed was the French peace.

VI

It was three o'clock in the morning when I went out to start on the return under the stars. The streets were dark and silent as we drove out; but the heavens were brilliant, and the twin lights of Tougourt shone behind us like light-houses as we made out into the sandy plain. A few miles on we passed a company of soldiers convoying a baggage-train — strong, fine faces above their heavy cloaks, marching along in the night. The stars faded and day broke quietly — a faint green, a dash of pink, a low, black band of cloud, and the great luminary rolled up over the horizontal waste. The morning hours found us soon in the heavy sands of the upland, with the old gray mosque and stretches of the *bois*, the desert drin, and we descended into the country of the marine views, the land of the mirage, mirror-like waters shoaling on banks of palm, dreaming their dream; and now it was Ourlana and the school, fresh horses and an early arrival at Mraïer, and sleep in the caravanserai amid horses and camels and passing soldiers, a busy yard. The chotts looked less melancholy as we passed over the lowland in the bright forenoon, and again there shimmered the far salt — the

ocean look where there was no sea, close marine views, and there was much mirage; and we climbed the ascent and glided on over the colored quartz, and the range of the Aurès rose once more above the horizon, beautiful and calling, and Aïn Chegga seemed a familiar way-station. Fresh horses, and the last start, and Bordj Saada seemed a suburb; and as we drove into Biskra, with its road well filled with pedestrians and carriages, it seemed like a return to Europe — so soon does the traveller's eye become accustomed to what at first was "rich and strange." And Hamet went to his baby boy.

SCENES AND VISIONS

V

SCENES AND VISIONS

I

IT was in my early days in the desert, and Yussef told me tales. There was a Bedouin camp — indicated vaguely in the distance by a gesture; a real desert encampment. "Were there many tents? Twenty? A hundred?" "There might be — thousands! — who could know?" It was near an old French fort where some relative, variously designated as little brother, step-brother, nephew, cousin, was in charge; we would be welcome; there would be cous-cous, real cous-cous, made in the desert. It was mid-winter; but a caravan had come in last night — the roads were good.

So we set out on a bright, cold morning with a heavy carriage and two large, strong horses, with wraps and rugs in plenty, and some Christian stores, and drove out by old Biskra as the low sun began his great circuit over the extended plain. It was my first venture into those long reaches of the waste, with their interminable

roll into the horizons. The beautiful cliffs of the Aurès began to stand up in their true grandeur, detaching themselves from the level, massing their long line and isolating the range in blue heaven — a wall of the world; the desert floor spread out like endless shallows of a sea of marshes, rising and falling with a vast undulation of shadows, far away; the winter desolation solemnized the quiet scene. The road was good enough at first, firm, though muddy; but the amount of water was surprising, and after a few kilometres, when old Biskra was only a dark-ribbed reef behind us, not to be distinguished from the other oases that dotted the distances about, the scene suggested more than ever an archipelago. It was soon heavy going continuously, and we were at our best when we could keep the edge of a ridge along which a lively brown stream poured turbulently. The land was wet, soaked, but not submerged; and on all sides, at varying distances, were living objects — flocks, camels, men — and the herds, though they were really far apart, gained an effect of number from the great spaces that the eye took in. Except for the character of the landscape, it would have been a monotonous drive; and it was high noon when we drew up at the old French fort, Bordj Saada.

I went toward the brow of the hill. A solitary Arab, an old man, was doing his devotions, and after I had passed, I turned and looked at him. It was the first time I had seen an Arab praying in the desert. With his face toward Mecca, he extended his arms and made his genuflexions, prostrating himself, oblivious to all about him; he was alone with his God. The ease and immediacy with which an Arab withdraws into his religion, independently of time, place, and circumstance, is one of the primary traits of the physiognomy of the land. I kept on to the crest of the rise, and as my eyes ranged over the great circuit of the field of vision the impressions that had vaguely fed me all the morning came to a climax and, as it were, focussed; it was a scene of the patriarchal age. It was as if the dark film of my memories had suddenly developed in my eyes the picture of Biblical life — the Scriptural landscape. The sky was filled with gray clouds in strata, spotting the expanse, where tracts of light interchanged with the shadows; and in the eternal vacancy, scarcely disturbed by the far, dark line of some emerging oasis, everywhere in the sea of light and distance were herds of camels, standing thin and tall, but distinct, in the long perspectives, solitary or netted wanderingly to-

gether, and straggling flocks with Bedouin boys in couples; here and there a low, brown Bedouin tent crouched to the soil; yonder was a brace of horsemen riding; the long line of a caravan behind me was rounding the sweep of the hill up from Tougourt, with its dwarfed camel leaders rudely clad. Few elements, but widely distributed. Flocks and herds and weather; the life close to nature; the lowly companionship of animals; the deeper feeling always intensified in broad prospects, of the spiritual brooding of nature around — in the blue and the sun and the cloud, in the distant mountain range, and in land and water: the simple, early, primitive world. It lay unfolded in such infinite silence, with such an effect of agelessness and continuity, of the elemental thing — human life on earth! To me it was early centuries made visible. It was desert life first grasped by my eye — primary, quiet, enduring; and how humble in its grandeur! The impression did not pass quickly away, but persisted long afterward; however obscured by the superficial incidents of the day, it emerged again; the mood was always there within. It is not unusual for me, and I suppose not for others, to live thus at times in a double consciousness of the outward and the inward life, a twofold stream of being

whose currents never mix, whose fountains are different; but on that day I especially marked the preoccupation and excitement of the deeper element. It was as if from some Pisgah height I actually saw the old Scriptural world.

Yussef came to tell me that the cous-cous was ready, for we had been much delayed and everything was more than prepared when we arrived. I went back to the old French post, an extensive four-walled structure, built like a *fondouk*, with stables and rooms on the inner sides, as a military rallying-point for storage and harborage, and commanding the route to Tougourt. It had been long disused and was in charge, apparently, of Yussef's "little brother," who turned out to be a full-grown man with a wife. She had cooked the cous-cous, and as I sat down to my meal in one of the bare interior cells looking on the great yard, it was brought in smoking. It is made of farina with small pieces of lamb mixed with it, and was piled up in a great, yellowish cone, enough for twenty appetites; and it was hot, not only in the ordinary sense of fragrant fuming, but it had bowels of red pepper. It was excellent, and I formed a liking for this *pièce de résistance* of an Arab feast that has never since betrayed me. Afterward there was coffee, with dates and an orange. So far as the

meal was concerned, our plan had been a brilliant success. I lit a cigar with contentment, leaving Yussef and the rest to their own share of the improvised fête, and when he appeared again I said impassively, "Well, the camp"; for I had not seen any signs of that Timbuctoo which had lured me forth on the winter desert. "Do you want to see the camp?" said Yussef. "Yes," I answered; "where is it?" It was close by.

He led me out down the northern hillside a short distance, toward a small enclosure on the slope, stopped, and said "*Voilà !*" There was one Bedouin tent. A low hedge of fagots surrounded it, on which a yellow dog frantically volleyed defiance. "Well," I said, "come on; I want to see it." But he stayed in his tracks; and, as I looked back questioningly, he said with great solemnity: "Too much dog!" A woman appeared, and he hailed her, and we went off to halloo to her husband, who presently approached and very willingly led me toward the tent. The woman had collared the dog, and the man shouted to him, but he was irreconcilable. The last word in my vocabulary of abuse — that beyond which nothing can go — is "the manners of a Kabyle dog"; and this one was a fair specimen. As I came into the enclosure and

stooped to enter the tent, his fury knew no bounds. The woman, bending down, held him securely with her arm tight about his neck, and the daughter, a young and pretty girl, clutched his hind legs in a firm grip; and he howled as well as he could. This was the central group in that low interior; and the woman, with her black hair and full, gleaming eyes, a face that in shape resembled that of an Indian squaw, heavy silver hoops in her ears, and a short, muscular, full-bosomed frame, was a striking and vital figure as she half strangled the beast and cheerfully and with interest guided my undue curiosity. I looked over the rude cooking arrangements, the bed, the strange implements — all the scanty furnishing of that human nest, almost hidden in the wet ground of winter, close to the earth. They were all polite and kindly and let me see and handle what I would. The space was small, and one could not stand upright. This was "their toil, their wealth" — I thought of the Syracusan fishers of the old idyl; and as I came away with snatches of it in my head, and the faithful watch-dog again danced and barked maniacally on the fagot-fence, I was glad that the poor fishers "had no watch-dog"; and I forgot to reproach Yussef for his tale of Timbuctoo — numbers are vague

things at best, and in Africa quite indescribable in their behavior.

While the horses were being harnessed, I sought out my hostess, the "little brother's" wife, and found her in a deep, large kitchen in one corner of the enclosure. She was dressed to receive me in all her finery. She was tall and gaunt, and garbed like an Ouled-Naïl — bright stuffs, rings, necklaces, ornaments, a barbaric vision to my then unfamiliar eyes, and with the tinsel a good deal rubbed off in places. She did the honors with touches of coquetry, and showed me the place where the cous-cous had been concocted, the cradle with the baby, and the *ménage*, and she took me up a dark, winding, stone stairway to the bedroom above. It was *triste* there — a place for a traveller's murder, I thought, in some French romance of feudal journey; when we descended, the cavernous gloom and rude largeness of the kitchen, in which a good many chickens were wandering about, seemed almost like a return to sunshine and life. Then we said good-by to the little group of various persons who had served us with so much good-will, and drove off by another route, westward, toward the oasis of Oumach, a dark line far away.

We swept into the country on higher ground,

under a clearing sky, and the panorama came back — the primeval story of shepherd and herding races, in the immutable grandeur of the great lines that framed it. We were going toward the sun, and there seemed no limit to the scene before and about us. It was the plane of its extension that was wonderful — and everywhere the intensity of the silence, the clarity of distant objects, and that quality of the infinite which no words, but only a real memory, can convey. Flocks and herds and men, scattered at great intervals, lessened behind us and drew near in the offing. The road was mud, but by no means the slough of the morning. We met no one; only we were abroad in the wet waste. We passed but one house, where there was an Arab — also with dogs, but not of the Kabyle variety — who gave us coffee; and the sun was westering far when we came to the angle where we struck the Biskra route and turned homeward. The dense blackness of the Oumach palms showed like an island in the dying day, as we passed them, near at hand; it was too late, too wet to stop there; and shortly afterward the sun went down in a clear sky, immense and red on the desert edge. Then I saw what was to me a remarkable phenomenon: a sunset on the earth instead of in the heavens. The ground,

more or less overgrown with scattered vegetation, sloped upward in a long, bold, westerly swell, and cut the horizon clear with its whole breadth; and this wide-flung earth surface through its entire width flamed scarlet, like a low prairie fire, burning with light; the ground glowed rosy red, and the plants and shrubs and every growing thing stood up, distinct in every twig and blade, as if on fire with gold, burning unconsumed, and slowly all turned to scarlet and faded to rich crimson, softened, paled and died. It was all on the earth; at least, if there was any color in the clear sky above, except the long horizon glow, I did not see it. I remembered a line of Keats that had always troubled me, because I did not know what he meant:

"While barrëd clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue."

I suppose it was a similar scene that he had witnessed. But in my own experience I never saw anything remotely resembling the marvel of that desert-kindled flame that brought black night.

It grew dark rapidly. There was no moon. The stars flocked out. In the obscurity the slight noises of the wind grew insistent; the cries of the camels in the darkness sounded weird. The road became much worse. We dipped into

pools, and as we advanced the tract was entirely flooded. We went at a snail's pace, the horses finding their way in the level waters that stretched out like a lake in the gloom. It was full night now. The water was at the hubs, and with a lurch it came in on the carriage floor. We stopped, for it was clear we were off the raised ground of the route on one side or the other. Yussef had been very uneasy, as he might well be, for two of the White Brothers had been drowned the previous week, travelling somewhere in this wide waste. He threw his burnoose up and knotted it, and drew up his garments beneath, and waded out to determine the lay of the slopes. Then we turned to the rising side, and after a hundred feet got onto the floor of the route again and kept it till we had passed the flooded tract. There were two or three Bedouin camp-fires on the west, and once we heard the sound of many voices in the darkness round one of them. Yussef, who was constantly in movement, asked me if I had a revolver, and where was it? It was very handy. "*Bon!*" he said, with satisfaction. But nothing could long distract my attention from the magnificence of the sky. There was not a cloud. Sirius was in the east, and Orion rising; and one by one I picked out the heaven marks of my boyhood,

north and west; but they shone with a splendor, a molten luminousness, a size and lowness undreamed of, and the lesser constellations were obscured by the multitude of starry lights — it was my first view of the desert sky at night. The whole heaven was nebulous with scintillating sparks and milky drifts, innumerable around and about the old leaders of the flock. It was a revelation of the starry universe. I was brought back from my reverie by Yussef's whole-souled ejaculation — "*Voilà! vieux Biskra!*" as he sank back with a long sigh of relief into his seat. The oasis was dark before us, and we were soon going by the earthen walls of the silent village and passing under the tall black palms that bordered the starred sky with their fronds, and caught the old constellations in their tops, from which Orion, eastward, lifted himself free in heaven. It was the end.

But how many times since then have the sights of that drive come back to me! When I think of Esau and Ishmael, of Mizpah and Goshen, I live over again the panorama of that winter day. It was not a scene I had beheld; it was a vision.

II

The dunes lie to the west of Biskra. They are real sand-hills; one can climb on them, there are echoes to be waked, and the plain stretches finely to the mountains behind; but it is the forward view that holds the eye. The altitude is not great, but high enough to give a perch something of the commanding power of a cliff prospect over the sea, and the dunes themselves reminded me vaguely of the Ipswich sand-hills of my own coast and their sterile sea-views. The magical thing in the desert is its unexpectedness; it is not at all like what one would have thought. It is not to me oceanic; but in those first days, owing to the moisture of the air and the wetness, it was more so than at a later time. At some hours and under some lights the desert from the dunes had touches of an April sea, fragments of its color; it was blue — not with the solid blue of ocean, but with ethereal tints, insubstantial veils, like inland August haze, or, to speak exactly, with the moist blueness of March. A brilliant March over stretches of melting snow crust by the sea is the bluest of all months; the sky and the ocean are deeply tinged, and the trickling waters of the snow

surface reflect the heaven through pale gradations of the universal hue, which, though nowhere intense, has great luminous volume; it is a blue world. I suppose it was the low moisture rising from the desert that took the reflections in bands and spaces; the scene showed at times vast, distant lakes of pale azure, violet lagoons, strips of fallen sky, indigo outlooks — far away — and all in that almost aerial tone, insubstantial, watery, spring-like, infinitely soft and delicate. From the heights of El Kantara, at the mouth of the pass that looks down on Biskra, such a scene is superb in the morning air, and one might well think he was going down to the roads of an inland sea unlike all others; and from the dunes, in certain weather conditions, though on a far lesser scale, one has this vision of the blue desert.

But it was not the blue desert that made the dunes a leaf in my book of memory; it was a brown little Bedouin boy on a sand-hillock whom I observed on my way home. I made his acquaintance. He was about ten years old; his ragged, earth-colored garment blew round his sturdy bare legs; he was capped with black hair, and his small herd of goats fed beside him. He was shy, and his stolid, great eyes looked up at me — those young Arab eyes, expressionless,

but which a touch of joy irradiates, seeming to liquefy their shallow light, making them soft like a caress. He was willing to be acquainted. I fed him with chocolate, and extracted from him the four French words he knew; but, notwithstanding the good offices of Chèrif, whom I had with me, the best educated of the guides, and now the master of the French-Arab school there, our conversation was mostly confined to mutual kind looks. I left him after a while, and a few moments later, as I was walking toward the carriage, he began to sing. I turned. There he stood, erect on the hillock against the desert slope and the low sky, with unloosed voice. The high treble rose with a certain breadth and volume; but its quality was its intensity. I would not have believed the silent little fellow had so much voice in him. "What is it?" I said. "It is for you," said the polite Chèrif; "it is to thank you." "What does he sing?" I asked. "*Un chant d'amour,*" replied Chèrif; and I could get no more from him except "blue eyes" and "*l'amour.*" I looked up at the boy's earnest face, as he sang bravely on, and listened; and when he had stopped we drove away, and the high treble began again on the hillside.

The Arabs sing much, but this was the first time I heard song in the desert. I always think

of the desert silence as embosoming such song, like the hum of insects in the grass; though it may be rare as a bird's wing, it is there in the great spaces; the desert, to my imagination, is a song-laden air, like Italy; but the Italian is garden song, the desert is wilderness song; the Italian is human, the desert song seems almost a part of nature, a part of the desert. I remember the Bedouin flutes and the low rhythms of the road and the camp; but when I take up a book of Arab song, I see the vision of the Bedouin boy on the hillock among his goats, carolling his *chant d'amour*.

III

It was the time of the April fêtes at Biskra, and I went out in the delightful warmth of the early afternoon to see. There were to be races, but I was especially attracted by the promise of a falcon hunt. A long line of white-robed Arabs streamed into the country fields, and I drove amidst them by a quiet road shimmering with dust, and when I turned by the great pen where the horses were kept, into the enclosure, the crowd was already assembled. It was a large, open plain whose side-lines were defined by the crowds of spectators who did not enter.

In the field were many scattered groups. French soldiers, lining the course, and a squad gathered on a neighboring hill gave the picturesqueness of military color to the scene; a little group of soldier camels enlivened the foreground; and everywhere were boys leading fine horses, venders of all sorts, velvet-eyed children in gala clothes, grave Arab men. I wandered over to where a company of white Mzabites, girt with brown cords, sat in a circle, with guns in their hands, and a superb banner on a staff floating over them, and to the place where the Ouled-Naïls — some forty of them — displayed their charms and ornaments with holiday faces. It was an animated scene of waiting — festal, decorative; native and European soldiers, pawing horses, prancing cavaliers, crowds of white-robed Arabs, with ample spaces. The carriage of the caïd of Biskra, drawn by two beautiful mules, stood next to me; he was a grave old man, a mould of courteous dignity, and with him were some young children in gay vests — a charming party. But the brilliant note of color was given by the red cloaks of the caïds and sub-caïds, blowing in the wind as they rode here and there on beautiful and spirited horses. Then there was a drawing in to the course, and the races went on — tense moments of excite-

ment as the horses sped by, pauses and waits, like races everywhere.

One scene stands out from the memories of that day. It was just before the hunting with the falcon began. It was a great and solemn scene, fit for a painter's eye, but no earthly canvas could hold it. The landscape lines were all low and long, immense in extension, the rigid lines of the desert firm and broad. The scheme of composition was one of horizontal planes. In the eastern sky the pink range of naked rock, the Aurès, cut the liquid blue with its almost rosy edges, a bank of color reaching far away into the distance; in the foreground, perhaps half a mile off, a second line of red-toned sand-hills notched the range low down; beneath them, and below the horizon line of the earth, stretched a long row of white-robed Arabs massed standing in a continuous line, and grouped together as in a bas-relief. Every figure was distinct in the brilliant light poured from the descending sun on the vast distances round about. I had never seen humanity and nature posed in just that way. It was a processional bas-relief, immovable and majestic, sculptured on the sand-hills and the rock; it was monumental, architectural, Egyptian. The sight defined for me one quality of desert landscape which I had

vaguely felt; it is the bas-relief of nature. The lowness of the visual plane, the clarity of the human figures, the framing of the scene against which everything is relieved, suggest to me the effects of bas-relief; the repose of the Arab, too, the fall of the folds of his garment, the simple actions, have more of the sculptural as a living thing than I have elsewhere observed. This scene was a supreme example of my meaning and of the artistic intuitions involved; it simplified my perceptions and also universalized them. I saw in it the arts of Egypt on which the immensity of nature still rested, as truly a desert art as the Moorish arabesques at Tlemcen. It was under this splendid and glowing entablature that the black falcon was loosed in air.

The gazelle — delicate and fragile creature — ran a short way ahead; the horsemen followed behind; the bird circled above, sighted his prey, darted swiftly on, and swooped down, striking the animal's head. The gazelle staggered and ran on as the bird rose, and from his height the falcon swooped again and struck; the animal fell, but sprang up and ran here and there terrified. Again — and again the little creature collapsed and bounded, ran on, but it was dazed and circled feebly; and again the black shadow shot down from the blue, and it

was over. The horsemen ran in, and took the falcon from the convulsive body, killed the gazelle, and flung a piece of the flesh to the victor. It was brief and brutal; but it was the reality of life, not human life, but Life itself on earth — the spirit of life as it might be in the desert without a human eye. I drove back through the sunset cloud of dust among the solid press, and came out on long lines of white-robed figures in procession ahead by the country-side, vividly green with the warm spring. I had seen two visions: one, that seemed almost of the eternal; the other, of life's moment — the living bas-relief on the mountain wall, the gazelle's death agony in the sand. I think that the earth never seemed to me more like a great amphitheatre than then — a spectacle, solemn, inscrutable, fated.

IV

The processional is an inherent trait in the desert landscape, owing to the fewness of the human figures and their concentration in the vastness of the horizons. Everything seems strung out — herds of goats, wandering camels, even the scattered palms; and in the caravans or troops of horse or military trains the feature

is emphasized. It is the trait of a migratory land. The *mise en scène* for a procession, in the true sense, is superb. The eye centres the scene on the great space and views it whole and entire at a glance; one could see the migration of a tribe or the march of an armed host so.

These reflections came to me the next day when I returned to the race-ground. The general scene was the same. A procession was already forming at the upper end of the field. The white-robed Mzabite group, with brown girdings round their loins and crossing their backs and lacing their turbans, whom I had seen the previous day with their guns, squatting about the splendid banner, were the leaders of the formation, which was on foot. This was peculiarly the Arabs' day. On the rising ground the procession gradually took shape and stretched out against the sky and the low palms, a long, white line of moving figures, with the high standard borne proudly advanced, Arab music, guns gleaming and sometimes held in the air. It moved, not with a martial look in the European sense, but with an aspect of oriental war. They were marching to be reviewed by their chief near the centre of the course, and to perform before him their *fantasia,* an Arab war game, in which one rank advances rapidly upon

another, fires, and whirls swiftly back. They came down the track in gallant show, and as they passed the old chief the mêlée began. Those in front turned to face the rank behind; the second line rushed frantically forward in confusion, every man for himself, fired their guns almost amid the feet of those before them, whirled back waving their weapons, and came on again, repeating the manœuvre. There was a great noise of powder, plenty of smoke and commotion; their bodies were all in violent action, their faces distorted with excitement, their garments fluttering. They came squad after squad, as the groups slowly worked by, and the din began farther up the line. It was a great game, vivid, spectacular, with the smell of powder biting the nostrils, the rouse of fighting blood, the drifting clouds of smoke — a waking dream of personal combat; and they thoroughly enjoyed it.

Then came the turn of the *goum*, the cavalry. The caïds, splendid figures in their brilliant red burnooses, came first. Each, single and alone, charged down the course on the gallop with headlong speed, holding in the right hand a gun in air and in the left a sabre; and as they passed the old chief they saluted with the sabre and discharged the gun, and swept on till the

thunder of their hoofs died away down the track. The *goum* followed, a fine body of horsemen, with similar tactics. The Arabs are expert in horsemanship as an art of riding, but it is said they are deficient in that part of the art which lies in care for the mount; they kill their horses. On that day the spectacular charging, the discharge of firearms in motion, the jockey-like cling and rhythm of bodies under the streaming folds of the riders, the *élan* of the troop, were fascinating, as all skilled physical motion and its accoutrement is to my eyes; but whether my battle sensations were exhausted, or for some other reason, the sight did not interest me so much as the earlier mimic combat on foot. It was not the proper setting for the *fantasia* of the *goum*. One should see it in the desert when the charging troop comes over the sands to salute some chief or Marabout with his grouped attendants, riding as if to overwhelm, discharging its guns at close quarters, wheeling just in time to avoid the shock of the horses. Here on the race-course it was a show; there in the sands it is a native custom, vivid and gallant with the spirit of a race — a flower of desert chivalry.

What had drawn me to the fête was the desire to see the Arab temperament in some of its

violent manifestations. One habitual trait of Arab life to the eye is the repose of its figures, seated or in motion; the grave courtesy, the immobile posture, the public dignity — the decorum. But, speaking of the race, this is the repose of a tropic animal; it wakes to an instant intensity of action, to a tiger violence. It was something of this side of Arab nature that I sought; and I found some suggestion of it in the mimicry of personal combat, the excitement, the confusion, the distorted faces and bodily vehemence of the play; and also in the *goum* some intimation of the look of their leaders, the old feudality of the desert. It all helped me to reconstruct the warrior, marauding, internecine, old desert world; but it was only fragments of vision. What a vivid race in its splendid and gallant spirit — as full of fascination there as it is dingy in its sodden poverty, earth-bound and earth-soiled, pitiable in its *misère*.

V

It was the music of the Aïssaouas in the night. The din was terrific, barbaric, ear-piercing, instruments and voices, as I entered the little, roughly boarded hall, sufficiently but none too well lighted, in which hung a slight haze of

smoky vapor. There were upward of a score of the order with their chief standing, and a few men were seated on one side, who made a place for me among them. The group in front, close by, filled a small, oblong space, in the midst of which over a fire was a fuming pot; near by it two or three musicians were beating the native drum, others struck cymbals, and a line of men, standing and swaying, lifted a keening rhythm of human voices in a continuous cry. A monotonous unison governed the whole music, which came in cadences, falling to a lower note and slower motion, then rising with swift acceleration to a sort of paroxysm, shrill and rapidly vibrating, and again dropping down till a fresh impetus sent the hard, strong, climbing pulse of the rhythm on its high crescendo. There was never any pause; again and again it culminated and fell away; but it could no more stop than blood. Cymbals, drums, voices — continuous din at first, and then a felt rhythm; it was a whip on the senses. Three or four of the figures were more excited; occasionally one bent his head into the fumes of the pot and took long breaths; these would dance, utter wild cries, creep about with muscular contortions, but no one seemed to pay much attention except the chief. He was a tall, large man, of uncommon

physical vitality evidently, heavily wrapped in a white burnoose, turbaned; and it was plain that nothing in the room escaped his eye for a moment, as he stood to one side overlooking, and from time to time giving an order of care or restraint for the more excited participants. Once accustomed to the noise and the lights, my eyes found much detail. A man just at my right, with the stare and spasmodic gesture of a half-witted person, was devouring pieces of the great leaves of the thorn cactus as if it were lettuce. Another went about chewing pieces of broken glass, which he begged for pitifully, to all appearance, and was as pleased when he got it as a child with candy; he ate it with avidity, like a ravenous animal. There seemed to be no arrangement about anything, nothing designated beforehand, but every one did as he pleased, while the shrill music rose and fell, the feet beat time, and the few who were given over to the intoxication, turbanless and half-garmented, swung among their brothers in a kind of exaltation and partial collapse that were dervish-like.

Suddenly a young man who was standing near me undid his turban, threw off the blouse he wore, and, entering the central group among the musicians, bent down his head over the fire and inhaled the fumes with long gasps. He

joined in the cry of the voices, danced, and grew quickly excited; he drew his shirt over his head, and thus, half naked, went again to the fire. At a sign from the chief two other men attended him, one on each side, and supported him; and shortly after — he may have been ten minutes under the influences, in all — the chief joined them, and the group came slowly toward me, making the circuit of the others. The youth knelt directly between my knees. He was, perhaps, eighteen, with a handsome face somewhat ascetically lined, but that may have been due merely to his poverty. He was well formed and muscled, bare to the waist. He seemed entirely dazed, and dependent for direction on those about him; his body was bathed in sweat and trembled violently all over; every particle of his flesh quivered; his eyes rolled, showing the whites in vivid contrast to his black hair, and he panted, as if he craved something intensely and blindly. He threw his head far back, exposing his throat, and one of the men, who held a long, straight sword over him, sank the point just at the base of the throat. It was not a deep cut, but the blood flowed freely, trickling down his breast. The whole took place so near me that I could easily have touched the youth without reaching; my knees

were almost against his arms. The others helped him to rise, still apparently unconscious, and led him off to one side. Then the surprising thing occurred. The chief held the boy in his arms tenderly, stroked him, caressed his cheeks, kissed him; the boy's head lay on his breast. Suddenly, as if with a snap, he came to, and instantly seemed perfectly normal, with no trembling, no convulsion, no sign of his previous state. He was let alone, and in the most unconcerned manner put on his shirt and blouse, arranged his turban, and after standing about a few minutes went away.

I stayed on, and my attention was attracted by a little fellow of eight or ten years, a bright street boy, who was wandering about among the others. He got some sort of permission from the chief, and they passed a knife through his right cheek — clear through. He was very proud of the feat, and walked up and down, shaking his head to make the knife waggle on its outer hilted side; but he was not at all excited. I remained perhaps an hour, and then shook hands with the chief, who was gravely courteous, and I went out under the stars; and the din died away in the distance.

The Aïssaouas are an order of magicians and are widely spread from Morocco, where they

have their centre at Meknèz, through Algeria and Tunis. Their founder was Sidi Mohammed-ben-Aïssa, of whom many marvellous miracles are related, but all are of the nature of prestidigitation; the association is, indeed, in some ways, a guild of that art. Its repute, however, among the Moslems, has its roots in the old magic of Africa, and rests on the habits of superstition which are the common ground of the veneration of the miracle-working Marabouts. The Aïssaouas claim immunity from many mortal ills. Nothing that they may eat — scorpions, stones, glass — can harm them; poisons are innocuous; wounds close at once and disappear. They are naturally the physicians for such ills in others, and are snake-charmers and wonder-workers. They are very nomadic in their habits, and go widely through the land. Many wild reports are current of their rites at their fêtes, of their sacrificing animals and tearing the flesh in pieces and devouring it raw; but these and other like things are traits of the orgiastic state in the lower stages of civilization everywhere.

It was a faint shadow of the primeval that I had seen. That human cry, mixed with the sharp cymbals and the drums, frantically wavering and receding, was an echo from the cen-

tral forests far inland; and that fire with the pot was the ghost of fetichistic rite, perhaps the oldest altar of mankind. The scene, the swaying figures, the intoxication of the body, the atmosphere, belonged to the earliest psychic experiences of the race. It suggested the invisible superstition that lays over and fills the present minds of the populace and the desert dwellers. I found the little boy on the street the next day, and he recognized me. I examined his mouth closely, and there was only a white roughness, like a scar, on the inside of his cheek and a scratch on the outside. He became very friendly; and my pleasantest memory of the Aïssaouas is of his street-boy figure standing on the desert, a quarter of a mile or more down the railway track, where he had gone to get near to my train and give me his last good-by with waving hands.

VI

The fascination of the desert, that which makes a desert lover, is not in its incidents, voyages, sights; it is in its life. It is the life of nature. I do not mean the picturesqueness of its human traits, the passage of men and animals over a scene with which they are so

sympathetically colored as to seem only a part of its flora and fauna, its transitory efflorescence; nor the landscape with its breadths, infinities, hallucinations, hierarchies of color, *élans* of the soul and poems of the eye, with which they are in conscious contact. It is a more intimate tie, and something that passes within — purifies, refreshes, and releases. The brain ceases to act; the nerves are put to sleep; the fever is over. The Old World has receded far away; years, decades have passed, dropping their burden of oblivion on all that was, and especially on what was acrid and fiery in the past. It is a return to nature in which she seems to have cast out devils. The senses bring their messages, but they have lost their material utilities. The soul rests in its sensations as a bird floats in the air. It is a foretaste of Nirvana. Thought has ceased; duty is silent; labor has vanished; and the life that is deeper than these and of which they were but mortal fragments, "unconcerning things," resurges, vibrates, flowers. What a relief! what a transmigration! and what a new sense of vitality — almost of a new sort of vitality! It is the repose, the silence, the concentration of being within — the peace. In the Western world one may attain this at times; the desert im-

poses it as the habit of the soul that yields itself to its influences. But it is more than this. The cerebral weight is lifted and the physical life resumes its natural lethargies. It is not really lethargic. It is a new kind of existence — the life, unburdened by thought, that has moulded the fine physical nature of this race abounding in energies. What a sense of freedom, of nonchalance and timelessness! What a vigor as I draw in this pure air! The world without a thought has a life of its own, a strange vivacity; it is rich with fresh and unexpected pulses of being; and this renewal and invigoration does not come whip-like, as in the north, with a bracing winter stroke on the blood and nerves; but like a caress, with a softness and a secrecy, a tenderness of the solitude, something almost voluptuous.

These are the words of a desert lover and make no claim on the credence of others; but no words can express the peace, the liberty, the vitality I felt in my desert voyages. The symbol and image of the mood and life I describe is to me the palm-tree. No other tree has ever so influenced my spirit except the cypress in a very different way. I would go out to the oued in the morning, for I could not spare to the day the initial sense of largeness, the tranquil deso-

lation, the sea suggestion of the river bed, with its lonely koubba; and, as the sun warmed, I wandered into the palm gardens of the oasis, and sat on the rough soil, and, as it were, adored the palms. I would lie there for hours, and the sun shone above them. Occasionally Arab workmen would pass near, or a boy or a guardian would come and sit beside me. Otherwise there was only the solitude, the unbroken silence, the repose. The gardens are rude and unkempt, with earth ditches and humps of ground, and an arid look, except where the vivid green of some cereal here and there beneath the palms, or the softer form and foliage of low fruit trees amid their towering stems, give a brighter and more delicate touch to the general scene. There is no luxury of turf or anything garden-like in these precincts of earth and running waters and trees. There is no effeminacy in the palm. Severity is the artistic trait of everything in the desert. The long lines of the landscape here are rigid, solemn, sombre; the naked rock of the mountain ranges is stern, worn to the bone by wind and rain and sand; except for the diaphanous and veiling effects of atmosphere and heat, and the cloud and mist conditions that I have mentioned earlier, an austere sublimity governs the horizons and vistas all around.

Even in the sands of the south about Tougourt, where every line the eye rests on is a curve and softens on the eye and lulls it like a diapason of great rhythms, this austerity is not lost from the desert scene. It is the nude in landscape — not mere nakedness of earth, but landscape sculptured and modelled in grand harmonies of line and color; and however it may become fiery with light and heat and darken with the violence of heaven, it always retains its look of bare and solitary power. There is no softness in the race either. Their bodies are cast in hard lines, but often with great physical beauty. There faces are, indeed, seldom of the nobler type; but their fine brown hands, their clear torsos and throats, the curve of strength and elasticity in their firm backs and limbs, with the weathered and sun-toned skin, their *fierté*, their perfection of repose, are objects of delight to an eye that values bodily beauty. To me this splendid vigor and careless abundance of the human beauty of life is one of the elements of the land. They have muscles of steel and lines of living bronze. It is daily art — art brought down from the vague of fancy and out of the museum to live with. The palm is like the land and the people; there is no softness in it; it is the most virile of vegetable growths. Its trunk,

its leaves, its sway — but I will not trust myself to describe it. I am never lonely with a palm to look at. I lie on the ground for hours and gaze up at their massed green tops in the blue and the sun and the warmth — "their feet in the water, their heads in the fire." I am never tired of looking. I do not notice the absence of thought. I am quiet, content, and doing nothing am very much alive if vaguely aware of my life. It is a new mode of living, this vital dreaming — a *volupté* without weakness, consciousness without meditation, vision without thought. That is the human aspect of this life of nature; and, in the world without, the palm over there symbolizes it for me.

The soldier-poet, Lieutenant Charles Lagarde, whose "Promenade dans le Sahara" I have already mentioned as at once the most realistic and best-portrayed book of the Sahara with which I am acquainted, well describes the palm:

"A monumental tree, puissant, royal; it shares in perfection form, majesty, elegance. Its isolated trunk fills a frame of five leagues and peoples a solitude. Its lift toward heaven has a magnificent simplicity, and it raises also the levels that surround it; it enlarges by contrast the vast sheets of sand on which it elongates at sunset its slender and unmeasured shadow. In

groups it has attitudes full of grace; among the tufted shoots rise the unequal and diverging trunks which in turn depress and proudly hold up their plumes. The wind in the palms has strange modulations. Its oscillations have I know not what of the voluptuous; it is the sultana that sways, an attentive slave. The tempest tests it without shaking it; it bends like a bow and springs back with the strength of a sword-blade. All in it breathes primordial energies, and chants the canticle of the Orient."

VII

The crudities of the desert have a charm all their own. There is a wild flavor not only in the life but in the nostrils. The strong saltpetre smells, impregnating the air for leagues, the earthy scents of the marsh-like and sodden soil, the odors of cattle, are stimulants; they recall the whiff of salt marshes by the sea, the tarred ropes of wharfs, the sharp fragrance of rolled seaweed on the beaches, aromas of low tide, in days of long ago. They are both prophecies and memories. They wake my boyhood blood and are a renewal of long slumbering appetites. I want salt in my life, an acrid savor. The desert dispenses with unnecessary

refinements; all pruderies cease; nature returns. Nature is clean; the wind and the sun are great scavengers; even death is no longer a corruption, but a negligible detail. The skeletons of the camels in the sands have nothing *macabre;* they are there as the tamarisk and the drin are there, objects of the sands, like floating spars at sea, wasting away in the great deep; they show the way that life has gone. Even the dogs, with their paws on the carcass, tearing the flesh, seem ordinary; the brutality ceases in the primeval naturalness of the act in the scene. It is the will of nature that rules there in the wild, and is accepted almost without notice. It is the same, too, with human life. Poverty, hardship, privation, lose half their repugnancy; it is only when men dispense them that they revolt us; humanity accepts necessary suffering with little appeal. The eye hardens, the heart stiffens; the fibre of an older world forms in us. It is a veritable return to nature. Old instincts awake; old powers of endurance come back and bring with them old moods of patience; old indifferences appear. Cruelties of man or nature are incidents. A new resistance is unlocked in the body, in the spirit. It is a strong life. It is the desert world.

It is under these lights that one contemplates

the wretched human lot in the wild glory of nature. The grandeur of the natural scene — the miserable life of men — no eye can miss that contrast over all these horizons. The splendid force of nature, visible in all its energies, on a scale of sublimity, triumphant, the master of the world! But life — it is *la misère*. Look at the crouching tent, irregularly striped with brown and white, wool and camel skin, pitched under the crest of the great yellow dunes or in some wrinkle of the rock face of the waste. There are a few sacks of barley and dates, a scanty provision for the future, heaped at the foot of the pole; a wooden plate or two, cups, an earthen pot; ropes, a goatskin of water, mats of alfa or other grass to sleep on. The wife, with a babe on her back and others tumbling about, toils through the day, draws water, boils the pot, weaves, bears the heavy burden. The boys go with the herd, the man to his labor. The night is an uneasy watch. The master sleeps, some weapon near by, his head on the little sack that holds the women's trinkets of coral or silver, or other trifles of value to them; if there is money, it is buried. The yellow dog with the pointed teeth growls, and howls, and barks — a jackal, a thief. Such is the day and night of the tent, the nomad life, moving from

place to place with the seasons, subject to all weathers, threatened by violent winds and sudden torrents, and often flitting day by day and leaving no trace. When a stay is more prolonged a hedge of fagots fends the tent from the wind, and gives a slight protection against nocturnal attacks of other wanderers. One sees the tent; it is a common object, and gives up its bareness at a glance; but one cannot realize its life. It is too near to the soil, to the deprivations and insecurity of animal life. What humility in its joys and pains! What parsimony! What a place for age, which comes rapidly here, and is isolated in its uselessness! Death reaps in it as in a harvest. The weak, the old, the stricken, in this life of continual contingency, go quickly away, and are as quickly forgotten. It is the life. The infant mortality is enormous, like the death-rate of creatures that spawn in order that the race may survive.

The life of the tent is on the outer margin of observation, though it is the nomadic life of the land. Where the natives gather together in villages one sees them more nigh. In a Europeanized place like Biskra, the native quarter of the town — not the village, which lies in the oasis — takes on the look of a ghetto. There, in the street, in the market, one sees the

poverty of the Arabs, the slender pittance of their days, wherever the humble wants and lean provision of their life emerge to public view; and Biskra is a place of great prosperity. There are many villages in the Rir country, however, that are quite untouched by the European. They have not the look of dilapidation and misery of the ksour of the Sud-Oranais, scarce distinguishable from the soil, dark and fallen warrens; but they are only a degree removed from that, and their life must be analogous. Arab poverty you may see anywhere in the land, but the full sense of it comes and sinks in only when one has broken the blank wall of the secrecy of such a village, and in some outlying place of their own, in the sand and the sun, gone into their houses. When a poor Arab enters his house it is as when some animal leaves the life of the forest for his hole in the ground.

One day I went up to El Kantara, the station at the mouth of the pass above Biskra, whose superb view, so often described, first gives to the traveller the measureless vision of the warm-toned, sterile lands, an empire worthy of the sun, and unrolls before his eyes for vague leagues the red and yellow earths, spotted by the black of the oasis-green — the desert's "panther skin," in

the old Roman's phrase. In the gorge below lies a great palmerai with three villages, and there I wandered all one winter day. I entered one of them — the first I had ever seen — and passed among the low houses through the narrow lanes. They were made of sun-dried mud — a continuous blank wall with rough-boarded entrances. It might have been a low line of rude stables. There was hardly any one in the streets; occasionally a figure came into view, and passed out of sight. There was intense silence — the silence of night — broken perhaps by the sound of a hammer, or a muffled voice in some interior. The streets were slimy and foul. It was desolation — nothing. It was depressing. The bright sun shone upon all; the cold, vivid green of the palmerai lifted its eyebrow masses against the stone of the cliffs and the intense blue of the sky; in the silence it might have been a dead village, a ruin in some abandoned land, like Yucatan. The strange sadness which is here so often felt and seems to exhale from the desert landscape, which is independent of brilliancy or gloom, a feeling so intimate as to be almost physical, like the languor of heat, lay on everything. It was *la tristesse*, which is universal in the desert, the pathos of "something far more deeply interfused" and infinitely sad;

it lurked in the air, the silence, the distance, in the light — everywhere.

I went into some of the houses. They were obscure. The shadows, the damp earth smells made them seem like caves in the ground. They were bare, rude, humble beyond description. I would not have believed that a man who had seen the sun could live in such a cellar-like abode. I was not naturalized then, not subdued to the land; it was a shock to my sensibilities; but later I would stand in such a place and, like my soldier-poet, feel glad that it was not Paris or Marseilles. One easily detaches himself from civilization if the desert talks to him long. One room stamped itself upon my memory. It was a dark, bare bedroom; the bed was made of rough timber, the unstripped bark still on its four posts; there was little else in the room. But on the walls there were three or four beautifully written Arab texts — verses of the Koran.

"So near is heaven to our earth,"

I thought, instinctively varying the line to the case; it was an unconsciously bitter jest. It sometimes seems that devotion in races is in proportion to the fewness of the blessings that the lord of heaven and earth gives to his wander-

ing creatures, and this was in my mind. But that bare, earth-walled room with its texts is my most vivid symbol of Arab piety. It is a believing race.

I remember when the reality of their belief first struck home to me. I was driving on the high plains below the peaks of the range on their northern side, returning from Timgad, that magnificent ruin of a Roman city of high civilization which still lifts erect its vistas of columns over the strewn ground of the abandoned plain, and in its vacant desolation brings back to me more vividly than Pompeii, with a greater nobility and dignity, with a finer imperialism, the great Roman world. I had seen it diminish and sink in the low sunlight, and drop behind. Night had long fallen over the uninhabited, long, Colorado-like, starlit slopes where we drove. It was bitter cold, and I had just drawn another sweater over the head of my Arab boy beside me. Suddenly he said with quick and earnest tones: "*Le bon Dieu* will take care of you." I was startled by the intensity of the unexpected voice. "*Le bon Dieu*," I said; "what do you mean?" The boy gazed at me steadily. I could see the gleam of his deep eyes in the starlight. "*Le bon Dieu*," he said, and nodded up to the sky. That nod was the most con-

vincing act of faith I ever saw. It was plain that he believed in God as he believed in the reality of his own body. I fell silent, thinking in how marvellous ways we are taught; for the boy taught me something. And as the earthen room with its texts is a symbol to me of Arab piety, the boy's gesture is my symbol of Arab faith — *la foi.*

I emerged from the obscurity into the brilliant silence of the day; but I could not shake off my oppression. The strange sadness, whose nature I have hinted at, which belongs to the desert, was beginning to make itself known to me. It does not come from the land; it is exhaled from the human spirit in contact with its mortal fate. It may be felt anywhere on the earth; but its home is in the desert. It is sometimes more defined amid the ruins of old cities, or where great tragic events of the race have left their traces on the scene or in the memory — *sunt lacrimæ rerum.* Here it is indefinable, a mood — *mentem mortalia tangunt;* something that haunts the brilliancy before the rainless eyes of the race of men who do not lament any particular catastrophe or weep an unusual loss; a half-unconscious sense of the spirit penetrated and impregnated with having lived, with a feeling of its common lot, its universal fate. It

marries with the monotony of things, of life. What monotony of life must be here! Who could understand such lives! I felt a darkness under all that I had seen of Arab existence. There is another side, an underworld, beneath what appears on the surface. Read the annals of Arab war, of Arab love, of Arab rule. What cruelty, what baseness, what rapacity! What a power of hate! No pen can tell the horrors of their warfare, their lust for blood and pain, their delight in carnage and savagery. It is the same with the story of their amours — violent, unmeasured, remorseless — explosions of life. The natural happiness of the race is in these things. So they paint the paradise before the French came, when "the true believers divided their time between love, hunting and war, and no one died without having known the drunkenness that an adored mistress or a day of powder gives." In the race at large, what lower forms does this heritage of the wild take on! One may read the books, hear living tales, share in actual scenes, and so come to stand in the fringes of their experience and temperament; but he does not penetrate into the Arab soul.

I wandered all day in the palmerai and along the river bank, loitered and forded and climbed, and enjoyed sun and wind and prospect; but the echo of the morning sadness did not leave

me, nor did it fade from the atmosphere. The desert life had laid its hand upon me. Later, day after day, as I stood in its lights and shadows, and began to understand, the desert moods grew at once more precise and more commingled, and one among them all seemed to absorb the others. It was the feeling of fatality in all things. It is sympathetic with the drift of my own consciousness. In my common days the sphere of our forethought and volition seems small. Our freedom is no more than a child's leash from the doorstep. We are embedded in an infinite body of law and circumstance; not much is trusted to ourselves alone. Within this narrow range human liberty is a creation of civilization, a partial dethronement of the tyranny of nature without, and of impulse within, a victory of knowledge, invention, and conscience. Submission is written all over the desert world, which is still in touch with the savage state. There man yet remains in large measure the slave and sport of nature and of his own unreasoned vital instincts. It is true that our diminished and shorn personal liberty in the state is a tame wine to the rich vintage of the freedom of the barbarian to kill, to rape, to rob — to eat up his neighbor and all that is his. The barbarian is the true superman, that monster of an all-devouring and irresponsible self-will. The

soul of the desert is not barbarous, but emerging from barbarism; it is on the way to some command of nature and to self-rule, and is rich in the ferment of life forces and in personal adventure; but it knows the iron net of necessity in which it is enmeshed. How extraordinary it is to observe that it is from the freedom of desert life that fatalism emerges in its most rigid and thought-vacant form! The first words of the struggling soul in its dim self-consciousness, amid the throes of impotency and defeats of effort, world-wide are: "It is written." The will of nature, the will of Allah, the will in which is our peace, however the formula be read, is the deepest conviction and last resort of humanity in the stage which it has not yet known, if it shall ever know, to transcend. Fatality stares from the face of the desert, and drops from the lips of its wandering race like leaves from the dying forest. It is the period of all their prayers.

Moods of the desert, which are also scenes and visions! the infinity, the solitude, the monotony; *la misère, la foi, la tristesse;* fate, peace! They are not words, but things; not thoughts, but experiences; not sentiments, but feelings. On the page they are shadows; there they are realities.

ON THE MAT

VI

ON THE MAT

I

IT was afternoon in a small oasis village of the Zibans. I was seated on a straw mat in a little garden-space just outside the café, and dreamily regarding the intense blue sky through the vine leaves trellised overhead, which flecked me with their shadows. An old Arab was praying just in front. Two groups, one on each side of me, were placidly seated on clean, yellow mats — young men, whose dark, sad faces, thin-featured and large-eyed, contrasted with their white robes. They were smoking kif — a translucence of gold in their clear, bronze skin, a languor of light in their immobile gaze, content. The garden made off before me, topped with palmy distance; the silent street, to one side, was out of sight, as if it were not. It was a place of peace. I had finished my coffee and dates. I filled my brier-wood. The May heat was great, intense; and I settled myself

to a long smoke, and fell into reverie and recollection.

How simple it all was! That praying Arab — what an immediacy with God! What a nonchalance in the dreamy pleasures of those delicate-featured youths! What a disburdenment was here! I had only to lift my index-finger to heaven dying, to be one of the faithful; and the fact was symbolic, exemplary, of the simplicity of Islam. It makes the minimum demand on the intellect, on the whole nature of man. I had but lately placed the faith in its true perspective, historically. Mohammedanism, the Ishmael of religions, was the elder brother of Protestantism, notwithstanding profound differences of racial temperament between them. The occidental mind is absorbent, conservative, antiseptic. It is not content, like the Mohammedan, to let things lie where they fall, disintegrate, crumble, and sink into oblivion. Western education fills the mind with the tangle-foot of the past. Catholicism was of this racial strain. It had a genius for absorption. It was the melting-pot of the religious past, and what resulted after centuries was an amalgam, rich in dogma, ritual, and institution, full of inheritance. The Reformation was an attempt to simplify religion and disburden the soul of this inheri-

tance in so far as it contained obsolete, harmful, or inessential elements; many things, such as saint's worship, art, celibacy, were excised. Mohammedanism, ages before and somewhat differently placed, initiating rather than reforming a faith, was an effort of the desert soul to adapt to itself by instinct the Semitic tradition of God that had grown up in it, and to simplify what was received from its neighbors. The founder of Islam was more absolute and radical in exclusion than the reformers in elimination. Islam had a genius for rejection. Mohammed, with the profound monotheistic instinct that was racial in him, affirmed the unity of God with such grandeur and decision that there was no room in the system for that metaphysical scrutiny of the divine nature in which Catholic theology found so great a career; on the other hand, with his positive sense of human reality, which was also racial, he shut out asceticism, in which Catholic conscience worked out its illustrious monastic future. He had achieved a reconciliation between religion and human nature in the sphere of conduct, and he had silenced controversial dogma in its principal field in the sphere of theology.

A creed so single and elementary had no need of a priesthood to preserve and expound it.

There was no room for a clergy here, and there was none. The Reformation diminished but did not end the priest; Islam suppressed him; yet there remained much analogy between Mohammedanism and Protestantsm in the field of religious phenomena in which the priest is embryonic. Protestantism is the best example in human affairs of the actual working of anarchy; and, in proportion as its sects recede from the authority and organization of the Catholic Church, it presents in an increasing degree, in its individuality of private judgment and freedom of religious impulse, the anarchic ideal of personal life. Islam offers in practice a similar anarchy. I was struck from the beginning with an odd resemblance to my native New England in this regard. It, too, has been a Marabout-breeding country, with its old revivals, transcendentalists, new lights, Holy Ghosters, and venders of Christian Science. Emerson was a great Marabout. The Mormons, who went to Utah and made a paradise in the desert, were not so very different from the Mzabites who planted an oasis-Eden in the Saharan waste. The communities that from time to time have sprung up and died away, or dragged on an unnoticed life in country districts, are analogous, at least, to the zaouias scattered through this world of mountain and

sand. In many ways my first contacts with the faith were sympathetic. The faith that had no need of an intellectual subsidy, that placed no interdict on human nature, that interposed no middlemen between the soul and God, woke intelligible responses in my agnostic, pagan, and Puritan instincts; here, too, was great freedom for the religious impulse and toleration of its career; and I saw with novel interest in operation before my eyes the religious instinct of man, simple in idea, direct in practice, free in manifestation, and on the scale of a race. It was the desert soul that was primarily interesting to me — its environment, its comprehension of that, its responses thereto; and, examining it thus, its religion seemed a thing *intime* and scarcely separable from its natural instincts and notions.

What is it that is borne in on the desert soul, when it wakes in the great silence, the luminosity, the boundless surge of the sands against the sky! Immensity — the feeling of the infinite — nature taking on the cosmic forms of God. The desert is simple. It has few features, but they are all elements of grandeur. It is the mood of the Psalms. Awe is inbred in the desert dweller. There is, too, a harmony between these few elements in their superb singleness and his lowly mind; not much is required of

him, and that little is written large for his understanding; he takes things in wholes. His mind is primary, intuitive, not analytical; he does not multiply thought, he beholds; and this vision of the world he lives in, a wonderfully grand and simple world, suffices for a religious intuition as native to him as the palm to the water-source. The palm is a monotheistic tree. Monotheism belongs to the desert. The faith of the desert is a theism of pure nature, unenriched by any theism of humanity, of the human heart in its self-deification; it is a spiritualization of pure nature worship, whereas Christianity, at least under some aspects, is the grafting of a human ideal on an old cosmogony. The God of the desert is an out-of-doors god, like the Great Spirit of the Indians, who had no temples. No mosque can hold him; there is no altar there, no image. He cannot be cloistered; he has no house, no shrine, where one can repair, and abide for a time, and come away, and perhaps leave religion behind in a place of its own. He is in the desert air; and the desert dweller, girt with that immensity, wherever his eye falls can commune with him; five times daily he bows down in prayer to him and has the intimate sense of his being; he does not think about him — he believes.

The desert cradles, nurses, deepens, colors, and confirms this belief. It is a land of monotony, full of solitude and silence. The impression it thus made upon me was profound, and amounted to an annihilation of the past. The freshness of the wilderness, as the discoverer feels it, lay there; it abolished what was left behind; the Old World had rolled down the other side of the mountains. Life in its turmoil and news, its physical clamor and mental clatter, life the distraction, had ceased. It was not that silence had fallen upon it; but the soul had gone out from it and returned to the silence of nature. There is no speech in that rosy ring of mountain walls, in the implacable gold of the sands undulating away to the blue ends of earth, in the immutable sky; they simply are. In the passage of the winds there is stillness. It is not that there are no sounds. The hush is of the soul. Monotonous? Yes. That is its charm. Monotony belongs to the simple soul; and what is monotone to the eyes of the desert dweller is monotone in the ideas and emotions of his psychology. Repetition belongs to Islam; its words and rites, its music and dances are stereotyped, something completely intelligible, identically recurrent, like tales that please children — the same stories in the same words. Prayer and

posture, formula and rhythm, endlessly renewing the same idea and the same sensation — they imprint, they intensify; desert moulds, they help the soul to retain its conscious form. The larger mind that discriminates, analyzes, and explores, may tire of this; but it also finds in such a solitude, full of silence and monotony, a place where the soul collects itself, integrates, and has more profoundly the sense of its own being.

The desert is not only the generator and fosterer of the desert soul in its spiritual attitude, its practices and processes, by the larger and universal elements in the environment, but in more detailed ways it provides the atmosphere of life. It is strangely sympathetic with the dweller upon its sands. He is a nomad; and the desert is itself nomadic. The landscape is a shifting world. The dunes travel. The scene dissolves and rebuilds. The sand-hills lift a sculptured mountain edge upon the blue, swells like the bosom of a wave, precipices and hollows like mountain defiles, outlooks, and hiding-places in the valleys, and the surface shall be finely mottled and delicately printed and patterned with lace-work as far as the eye can see. The wind erases it in a night, hollows the hills and fills the hollows; it is gone. The oases disap-

pear; they are like islands sinking in the sea of driving sands; you see their half-sunken trees like ruins buried beneath the wave, still visible in the depths. The face of the land is ephemeral; to leave the route is to be lost. And after the wind, the light begins its play. The lakes of salt and saltpetre, the lifeless lands, the irremediable waste — ruins of some more ancient and primordial desolation, the region cursed before its time with planetary death — change, glitter, disclose placid reaches of palm-fringed water, island-paradises, mirage beyond mirage in the far-reaching enchantment, strips of fertility like lagoons on the mineral mud as when one sees a valley-land through clouds. The heat gives witchcraft to the air; size and distance are transformed; what is small seems gigantic, what is far seems beside you; a flock of goats is a cavalcade, a bush is a strange monster. To the nomad in those moving sands, in that air of illusion and vision, in those imprecise horizons, the solid earth might seem the stuff that dreams are made on. The desert is a paradox; immutable, it presents the spectacle of continuous change.

Nowhere is the transitory so suggested, set forth, and embodied. Here is the complete type of human existence, permeated with im-

permanence, the illusory, and oblivion, yet immutable; the generations are erased, but humanity abides with the same general aspects. The land is a type, too, of the desert past — its tribes globing into hosts and dispersed, its dynasties that crumble and leave not a ruin behind, its inconsecutiveness in history, wars like sandstorms, peace without fruition. It is on this life, and issuing from its mortal senses, that there falls the impalpable melancholy and intimate sadness of the desert. The formlessness of the vague envelops all there; it is the path of the unfinished, the illimitable; it is the bosom of the infinite where life is a momentary foam. Mystery is continuous there, a perpetual presence. Its human counterpart, its image in the soul, is *la rêve*, the dream, reverie, as changeful, as illusory, that takes no root, fades, and vanishes. It is not a merely contemplative sadness; it is a physical melancholy. The oases are full of fever, of the incredible languors of the heat — breath is a weight upon the lungs, blood is weariness in the veins, life is an oppression and an exhaustion. It revives, but it remembers. There is a swift spring-time of life, a resilience, a jet, of the eternal force, and age comes like night with a stride. Death is the striking of the tent. It is quickly over. You shall see four

men passing rapidly with the bier, a wide frame on which the body lies, wrapped in white; in the barren place of the dead they dig with haste a shallow hollow in the sand; they stand a moment in the last prayer; they have covered the grave swiftly and stuck three palm twigs in the loose sand, and are gone. A change of day and night, of winter and summer, of birth and death, and at the centre the wind-blown desert and the frail nomad tent; and then, three palm twigs in the nameless sand.

The desert gives new values to life. It is a rejuvenation of the senses, a perpetual renaissance. The fewness of objects and their isolation on the great scene increase their worth to the eye, and in the simple life all trifles gain in meaning through receiving more attention; the pure and bracing air invigorates the whole body in all its functions, and the light is, in particular, a stimulant to the eye. The intensification of the pleasures of the senses is due also to the austerities and hardships of life in the waste and the change from suffering to ease. To the nomad, after the rigors of the sands, heat and thirst and glare, all vegetation has the freshness of spring-time; the oasis, welcoming his eyes, is, in truth, an opening paradise. The toiling caravan, the French column,

know what it means. The long, black-green lines of the oasis over the sands is like the breaking of light in the east; the sound of running water is a music that reverberates in all their nerves; fruits hanging in cool shadows, flowers, groves — it is *la vie*, the great miracle, again dreaming the beautiful dream in the void. After the hamada, the desert route, it is paradise. It is impossible to conceive of the sensual intensity of this delight, of its merely bodily effervescence. The Arabs are a sensual race, and the desert has double charged their joys with health and hardship; their poverty of thought is partly recompensed by fulness of sensation. The oases are not gardens in the European sense; they are rude and arid groves and orchards and fields, with a roughness of untamed nature in the aspect of the soil; and the desert everywhere is savage in look, with the uncared-for reality, the nakedness, and the wild glory of primeval things. Yet I have never known habitually such delicacy and poignancy of sensation. The wind does not merely blow, it caresses; the landscape does not smile, it mirrors and gives back delight; odors and flavors are penetrating; warmth and moisture bathe and cool; there is something intimate in the touch of life. There is a universal caress in nature,

a drawing near — something soothing, lulling, cadenced — felt in the blood and along the nerves, a *volupté* diffused and physical; for there is a flower of the senses, as there is a flower of the mind, as refined in its exhalation, in the peace of vague horizons, in wafted fragrances of the night, in luminosities of the atmosphere, in floating vapors of morning, in the dry bed of the oued under the moon, in the pomegranate blossom, in the plume of the date-palm flower, in all evanescence, the companionship of some little thing of charm, the passing of a singing voice. The desert is rich in those mysteries of sensation that remain in their own realm of touch and eye and ear, reverie and dream. It is a garden of the senses; and the wild flavor of the garden gives a strange poignancy to its delights.

This sensuality prolongs its life in the higher faculties; it penetrates and impregnates the mental consciousness; memory and imagination are strongly physical; the soul-life itself is deeply sensuous. It is, in this primitive psychology, as if one should see the coral insects building up beneath the wave the reef that should emerge on a clear-skied world. The desert music reveals this most clearly. Sensation, as has been often said, enters into the arts in

varying degrees. Literature is the most disembodied of the arts; its images are most purely mental and free from physical incarnation; then, in order, painting, sculpture, music include greater actuality of sensation by virtue of which æsthetic pleasure, as it arises from them, is more deeply drenched in physical reality. The senses are preliminary to the intellect; that is why the arts precede the sciences in human evolution. The desert dweller has no sciences, and his only art is music, which itself is in a primitive stage, being still characteristically joined with the dance in its original prehistoric union. The Arabs sit, banked on their benches, apathetic, gazing, listening, while the monotonous rhythm of the dance and the instruments rises, sways, and terminates, and begins again interminably. What is their state? It is an obsession, more or less profound, of memory and imagination, retrospective or prospective experience, felt with physical vagueness, defined, vivified, and made momentarily present by the swaying dancer in the emotional nimbus of the music. It is the audience at only one remove from participation in the dance, contemplative but still physically reminiscent of it. The dances are of two general types: that of the negroes, a physical hysteria, full of violent ges-

ture, leaping, and loud cries, the barbaric paroxysm; the other that of Arab origin, a voluptuous cadencing to a monotonously responsive accompaniment. The desert dweller is a realist; his emotions, his desires have not transcended the facts of life; his poetry, so far as it exists, and there is a considerable amount of it, is one of simple and positive images. Mysticism, in the intellectual sense, the transformation of the senses into the spirit, does not exist for him; not nearer than Persia is the mystic path which leads to the ecstasy of the soul's union with the divine, of the Bride with the Bridegroom; the desert knows nothing of that Aryan dream. Sensation remains here in its own realm; and its summary artistic form is music, itself so physically penetrating in its method and appeal. The music of the desert is to me very attractive; it engages me with its simple and direct cling; snatches of carolled song, the humble notes of its flutes, the insistence of its instruments fascinate and excite me. It is the music of the senses.

The sensuality of the Arabs also found other climaxes, in love and war. It is the intensity of their passion and of their fighting which has charged their history, as a race, with its greatest brilliancy; and at their points of highest

achievement a luxurious temperament has characterized them, which has made an Arabian dream the synonym for all strange and soft delights. The desert in its degree has this *mollesse*, physical languors, exhaustion; but its home is in the oasis-villages. The true nomad contemns the oasis-dwellers as a softened, debilitated, and corrupt race; the life of the nomad is purer, hardier, manlier; he is the master; the oasis pays him tribute. The life of the senses, however, in either form, passes away; vitality ebbs the more swiftly because of its rapid and intense play; pallor falls on the sensations, they fade, and joy is gone. Melancholy from its deepest source supervenes; in the desert — age in its abandonment, decay, and poverty; in the oasis — life somnolent, effeminate, drugged. The wheel comes full circle in the end for all. Meanwhile the vision of life is whole, and goes ever on. Youth is always there in its beauty and freshness. There is always love and fighting. Nature does not lose her universal caress. The desert soul still adores the only God in his singleness. There is great freedom. The route calls. It is human life, brave, picturesque, mysterious — beset by the sands, but before it always the infinite.

Yet, fascinated though I was, I was aware of

some detachment. Sweet was the renaissance of the senses — what brilliancy and joy in their play — merely to look, to breathe, to be! To have come into one of the titanic solitudes of nature, comparable only to ocean wastes and amplitudes of the sky, and to dwell there, far from the mechanic chaos, the unbridled egotism, the competitive din — what a recovery of the soul was there, of human dignity, of true being! and to find there a race still in a primitive simplicity, unburdened by thought, not at warfare with its mortal nature, the two poles of the spirit and the body married in one sphere — and to feel the rude shepherding of nature round their nomad lives, inured to hardship, but swiftly responsive with almost animal vitality to her rare kindlier moods and touches — it was a discovery of the early world, of ancestral, primeval ways. It was a refreshment, a disburdenment, an enfranchisement; and it was a holiday delight. Yet over these simplicities, austerities, and wild flavors there still hung a moral distance, something Theocritean, the mood of the city-dweller before pastoral charm. To sit in the café in the throng of Arabs with the coffee and the dance, to muse and dream on the mat alone, to lie apart in the garden and be content — it was a real participation;

but in the background behind, in the shadow of my heart, was the old European though eluded. This life had the quality of escapade — to see things lying crumbled and fallen with none to care, to be free of the eternal salvage of dead shells of life and thought — a world so little encumbered with the heritage of civilization! How many years had I spent, as it were, in a museum of things artificially preserved in books, like jars — in the laboratory of the intellectual charnel-house! The scholar, accumulating the endless history of human error, has no time to serve truth by advancing it in his own age; he lives so much with what was that he cannot himself be; his inheritance eats him up. The crown of Western culture is apt to be an encyclopædia. There was no library in the desert. And religion — how much of it comes to us moderns in a dead form! Surely religion is a revelation *of* the soul, not *to* it. This is a doctrine of immanence. If the divine be not immanent in the soul, man can have no knowledge of it. Religion is an aura of the soul, a materialization of spiritual consciousness, varying in intensity of light and tones of color from race to race, from age to age, and, indeed, from man to man; it is the soul's consciousness made visible. It is not to me interesting as scientific

truth is, a thing of worth in the realm of the abstract, but rather as artistic truth is, a vital expression, something lived. What a reality it had here in the desert soul — its effluence, almost its substance, giving back the spiritual image of nature in humanity, a condensation of the vast spaces, the vague horizons, the monotony, the mortal burden, in a prayer! It is a new baptism into nature, if not unto God, only to see this aura of the soul in the desert. The scene in all its phases — landscape and men — was to me an evocation of the long ago. But the soul does not return upon its track. The simple life is only for the simple soul. The soul of the old European is not simple. Yet if the leopard could change his spots, if one could lay off the burden of thought, lay staff and scrip aside, and end the eternal quest, nowhere else could he better make the great refusal and set up an abiding-place as in this nomad world. Its last word is resignation; peace is its last desire.

The desert world is a dying world. That is the sadly shadowing, slowly mounting, fatally overwhelming impression that grows on the mind and fills it. Death is the aspect of the scene; sterility, blankness, indifference to life. Inhospitality is its universal trait and feature.

It is as hostile to animal and vegetable as to human life — its skeleton lakes without fishes, its drifting valleys without birds, its steppes without roving herds. Its oases are provisioned with water and bastioned with ramparts against the eternal siege of the sands; to preserve them is like holding Holland against the sea. The mere presence of man, too — what is human — shares in this aspect of death. I have mentioned the cemeteries, mere plots of extinction, anonymous, without dates, leaving nothing of degradation to be added to the sense of hopelessness, futility, and oblivion. The dwelling-places of the living are hardly more raised above the soil or distinguishable from the earth they crumble into — typically seen in those ksour of the south, cracked, with gap and rift, dissolving in ageless decay and abandonment, mere heaps over the underground darkness of passages and cells — or here embosomed in a great silence, full of solitude and secrecy, the life of the palm garden, of the great heats, of the frigid nights; always and everywhere with the sense of an immense desolation, denudation, and deprivation. The life of the tent is one of sunshine and vitality by comparison; humble and rugged, it has no decadence in its look; in the villages the decadence seems almost of the soil itself.

One goes out into the desert to escape the oppression of this universal mortal decay; and there is no life there, only a passage of life, of which the skeleton of the camel in the sands is the epitaph.

A dying world and a race submissive to its fate. In that nomad world, where everything is passing away, there is nothing fixed but the will of Allah. It is not strange to find fatality the last word of Islam. In the desert world the will of nature appears with extreme nakedness; the fortune of man is brief, scant, and unstable; the struggle is against infinite odds, a meagre subsistence is gained, if at all; and the blow of adversity is sudden and decisive. Patience everywhere is the virtue of the poor, resignation the best philosophy of the unfortunate, and defeat, as well as victory, and perhaps more often, brings peace. These are great words of Islam, and nowhere have they sunk deeper into life than in the desert-soul. They are all forms of that fatality which the desert seems almost to embody in nature, to exercise in the lives of its children, and to implant in their bosoms as the fundamental fact of being. Fatality is in the outer aspect of things and exhales from the inward course of life; melancholy, impotence, immobility accumulate with

the passage of years; effortless waiting, indolence, prayer, contemplation — these are the shadows in which is the end. This mood of the despair of life has nowhere more lulling cadences of death. The desert is a magnificent setting for the scene — its strong coloring, its vast expanses, its unfathomable silences; its desolate grandeurs, its sublime austerities, its wild glory — godlike indifference to mankind; its salt chotts, immense as river valleys, tufts of the sand-sunken palms — premonitions of the disappearance of life from the earth, the final extinction of that vital spark which was the wildfire of the planet, the thin frost work on the flaking rock, the little momentary breath of love and war and prayer. Here life takes on its true proportions at the end — all life; it is an incident, a little thing in the great scene. A dying world, a dying race, a dying civilization, truly; but the old European, the wise pessimist in the shadow, has seen much death; to him it is but another notch on the stick. To me, personally near to it and fascinated in my senses still, it is *très humain*, exciting, engaging; and the melancholy that penetrates it ever more deeply and mysteriously does not interfere with its charm, its blend of delicacy and hardiness, of spirit and sense, of freedom and fate. I have

a touch of the heart of the desert-born. "If love of country should perish from the earth," said my soldier-poet, "it would be found again in the heart of the Bedouin." No race is more attached to the soil, or so consumed with home-sickness for it. The Bedouin loves the desert.

II

A STRANGE thing to me was the absence of any political state. There has never been a political state, properly speaking, in the desert. Such was the parcelling of the communities, so elementary the governmental form, so feeble the impulse of political aggregation and cohesion, that the general condition might seem to be an anarchy. In the Kabyle villages of the mountains and among the Mzabites of the Sahara the assemblies of the elders with the election and change of head men present an aspect of such primitive simplicity and independence that they might be thought freemen's institutions of an ideal purity; on the other hand, the absence of any political centres of concentration forbade the formation of a nation. The recognition of the tribal blood-tie conserved groups, smaller or larger, with a greater or less sense of unity; but feud was the natural condi-

tion of these units, extending to the smallest and even into families, and in the larger world political history found only hordes hastily massing for temporary ends and dissolving in a night, or empires of facile conquest and loose tributary bonds, of the nature of a primacy rather than a sovereignty, and without long continuity of life. Public order, with its correlatives, security and peace, was little realized, and, however ideal local institutions might seem within the group, it was, viewed largely, a barbaric world.

A very pure democracy in its primitive form prevailed. All men were equal before Allah, and the condition of equality generally obtained also between man and man. Inequality belongs to civilization; the absence of that, and especially the lack of security for wealth and its inheritance, of an official class of state functionaries and a clerical hierarchy, and pre-eminently the lack of knowledge, removed main sources of that differentiation which has stratified modern society. There was a noblesse of the sword and also of religion, grounded originally on descent from Mohammed or more generally and powerfully here in the West from some Marabout, but neither class was really separated from the people. The only effective source of inequality was *virtù* — real ability. Tradition made it the

glory of the Arab noble to dissipate his patrimony in gifts to his friends and to rely on the booty of his own hand for himself. Ignorance, besides, is a great leveller, and poverty is the best friend of fraternity; liberty was native to the soil. It was a society where all men had substantially the same ideas, customs, and desires, thought and acted, lived, in the same way. It was a natural democracy, and inbred; and to-day this trait is one of the most striking and refreshing that a sojourn among its people brings to notice, for it is a real democracy, unconscious of itself, vital, and admirable in its human results.

Race-consciousness found historic expression only in the religious field. The spots where the faith first began on the soil, the tombs of great leaders in the conquest, such as that of Sidi Okba in the oasis not far away, the white domes of the Marabouts sown like village spires through all this land, were places of sacred memory, centres of race-consciousness, and here took the function of integrating the common soul of the race, as, in other civilizations, political memorials of great public events and famous men develop national consciousness. In the desert patriotism and faith are one emotion. The ideal Mohammedan state is a pure theocracy in which

the political and spiritual powers are one and inseparable; where this condition prevails is the *dar el Islam*, the land of Islam, the soil of the true faith; elsewhere, wherever the union is imperfect or the faith must concede to the infidel, is the *dar el harb*, or, as we should say, missionary countries. Neither Turkey nor Egypt is *dar el Islam;* its narrow, though still vast, realm is the Libyan sands, where it still refuges its people. It is an arresting sight when religion goes into the desert to be with God; the Pilgrims of the *Mayflower's* wake, the Mormons of the sunflower trail fill the imagination with their willingness to give up all, to go forth and plant a new state sacred to their idea. It is always an heroic act. Such a coming out from among the world, such a going forth into the inhospitable waste has been characteristic of desert history. Solitude is the natural home of orthodoxy, of the fanatic sect and the purist. Mohammedanism in its primary stage was a particular religion of a desert people; in its secondary stage, as a conquering faith, it had to develop its capacity for internationalism, its powers of adaptation to other breeds and of absorption of foreign moods and sentiments, its fitness to become a world religion; in itself also there was necessarily the play of human

nature involving, as time went on, a variation into sects, heresies, innovations; thus, for example, it absorbed mysticism from the extreme East and whitened the West with the worship of saints. The faith was purer and more rigid in the desert, generally speaking, and was there more primitively marked; there it was safest from contaminating contacts; and there also Western civilization, closing round and penetrating its realm, finds the most fanatic and obdurate resistance.

Race-resistance to the invasion of the modern world, naturally following the lines of race-consciousness, notwithstanding the aid it received in the beginning of the struggle from the old feudality of the desert, had its stronghold in religion and its organization; and, specifically, it found its practical rallying-points and strongest alignment in the confraternities, or secret orders, with their zaouias, analogous to mediæval abbeys and monasteries, which had so great a development in North Africa in the last century — some more enlightened in leadership and capable of assimilating Western benefits in some degree, others stupidly impervious to the new influences and events. These brotherhoods, whose nomadic agents under the guise of every humble employment course the land with great thor-

oughness, are ideal organizations for agitation, collecting and disseminating news, preparing insurrection, fomenting and perpetuating discontent and secret hope; it is they and their machinations that are back of the Holy War, as a race idea. They are all hearths of the faith; but some, such as the Tidjaniya, recognizing both the fact of French power and the reality of the benefits it confers, are committed to political submission and peace; others are less placable, and nurse eternal hate of the infidel, with a credulous hope of expelling him from the land; and one, the most irreconcilable and the most powerful, is an active foe. This fraternity is the Snoussiya, having its seat at Djarbout, in the Libyan desert, where it has constituted a veritable empire of the sands, a pure Mohammedan state; it has divided with the neighboring empire of the Mahdi, and with that of the Sultan of Morocco, the proud title of *dar el Islam*. Sidi Snoussi, the founder, was a humble *taleb* of Medjaher, in the province of Oran. He preached the exodus, and led the recalcitrant and irreconcilable into the Cyrenaica, and there by virtue of his natural ability and enterprise built up a state, to which his sons have succeeded, the eldest of them having been already designated by his father as the promised Mahdi,

the always expected Messiah of Islam, who should restore its power as the true kingdom of God on earth. It is this state which is the centre of Panislamism, the hope of a reunion of the entire Mohammedan world after the fall of the Sultan at Constantinople should be accomplished. The desert round about owns its sovereignty from Egypt to Tunis, and it is buttressed on the south by the negro states which it has joined in proselytizing, converting them from their savage fetichism.

The spirit of proselytism has always been active in North Africa. The story of its saints from early days contains a missionary element, acting at first on the indigenous barbarism of the desert and mountains and extending at a later period to the negro populations of the Soudan. The Snoussiya, together with other Mohammedan agents, has conducted a proselytism to the south which has been astonishing in its success and has long arrested European attention. Islam is, indeed, well adapted to convert inferior peoples, and adopts an intelligent policy in practice. The simplicity of the faith, the absence of any elaborate dogma or ritual, its slight demand on the intellect, together with its avoidance of anything ascetic in its rule of life, made it easily acceptable in itself;

and its tolerant advance, without pressure, on the imitative instincts, the ambitions and interests of the savage populations with which it is in political and commercial contact, secures its spread without irritation or disturbance. It is the warrior race of the Foulbés in the Soudan who have most carried forward this movement of mingled spiritual, political, and commercial conquest; beside these, like the Jew by the Arab, are the Haoussas, a black race, with a commercial instinct, who established themselves under the protection of the Foulbés; they, generally speaking, have the monopoly of instruction and are the simple teachers of the region; the fetichistic tribes, coming under the influence of these Moslem expansionists by conquest, protectorate, marriage, in one and another way of the old and universal methods of the transformation of a lower race by a higher, are thus added to the domain of Islam. So important is this religious change, and so striking is the event, that some Catholic bishops have seen in it a providential preparation by an intermediate state for a future evangelization. What is noteworthy is the active spread of Mohammedanism contemporaneously in Central Africa and its close connection with the power of the Snoussiya, the most energetic and fanatic centre of

Islam. The dream of the poor preacher of Oran has come partly true: in leading the irreconcilable into the Libyan desert and building a refuge for them in the most desolate wastes of the eastern Sahara, in the *dar el Islam*, he established a new centre for the faith in a region backed by populations where its natural spread is great and its presence is likely to be long continued, and he aroused through all the Mohammedan world the spirit of Panislamism. It is in his work and the fruit of it that race-resistance to the impact of the modern world on the old life of the desert all along the African coasts of the Sahara finds its climax, its centre, and its hope; elsewhere it has ebbed slowly away.

That retreat of the old faith into the desert out of whose immensity it was born, to die if need were in its own cradling sands, far from the pollutions of the modern and changed world, excites the imagination and commands admiration. It might be the episode of an epic, with its *mise en scène*, its protagonist, its atmosphere of travel and assemblage, and the coloration of its auxiliary tribes. It has classical poetic quality. But to the meditative mind the fortunes of the *dar el harb*, the nearer land of the infidel, is more profoundly impressive. It is a curious feeling that comes over one at the

thought that he is present at the death of a race and has before his eyes the passing away of a civilization, and that civilization a culture in its essential features once common to the human family. That is the scene here — the passing of the early world. It is like the passing of the Indian world of the wilderness from America that our fathers saw, only in a more concentrated scene and on a more impressive scale — the death of an ancient mode of life in its home of centuries, full of memory going back to the dawn of history. It is a solemn thing for the reflective mind to witness, hard to realize adequately. Agriculture is gaining on the pastoral state, supplanting it; the nomad is slowly becoming fixed to the soil; the towns increase in number and population and in the variety of their life; peace, order, security establish themselves; capital, science arrive — companies, railways, telegraphs, communication, and transportation — and the face of life is changed; in a few years there will be no more caravans to Tougourt, to Tripoli, to Ghadamès — they will be legends like the mule-trains and prairie-schooners of the old emigrant West.

The economic change is most obvious, the inrush of the mechanical and cosmopolitan, colonization and exploitation, public works and

private enterprise, securing and furnishing the territory for a commercial tillage and use. Is it a dispossession of the native from the soil or is it a means by which he may more justly enjoy it? The people, in the old days, lived in a sort of serfage to the nomads or the zaouias. The French régime put an end to desert feudality, but treated the zaouias with more consideration, owing to their religious character. The zaouias of Algeria, notwithstanding some counter-currents among them, generally accepted French rule and co-operated with it. The result, nevertheless, was largely a lessening of the economic lordship of the religious families at the head of these establishments and an enfranchisement of the people from dependence upon them. The zaouias were sources of great communal benefit; they practised especially the Moslem virtues of alms-giving and hospitality; but they also took tithes and offerings. Their social importance has diminished; and, in place of the old half-patriarchal, half-feudal system, society takes on the modern structure of economic individualism. The impersonal administrative system, dealing with all in an individual way, shivered the primitive economic collectivity of society at a stroke. The modern world has come; capital, wages, earnings bring new arrangements and ways of

living; the economic career in a commercial world is open and safe, wealth is its prize, competence is possible for those who can maintain themselves in the way; the new dispensation — the future, has begun. Life is more free, more just, fuller of opportunity, and it is also more difficult; new desires, new temptations, and new needs arise; the cost is greater. Civilization enforces the higher standard of living even on the lowliest. This is the material fact most powerful in transformation. It is a fact inherent in progress.

The change in manners is the superficial expression of economic changes. There is an ingathering into the towns, and, as always, in the first contacts of a comparatively primitive race with a luxurious civilization the corruption of manners and morals is patent; the weakening of the old fibre of life before the new fibre has time to form occasions a moral displacement. This is most noticeable in the cities of the coast, but in some degree is everywhere to be seen. There is, as it were, a sifting of classes; the more advanced, those who are most sensitive to the new and most free and bold, begin an exodus from the *café Maure* to the European restaurant; they imitate the foreigner, ape his ways and take the mould of his habits; the French

vie tends to establish itself as the ideal, to a greater or less degree, among the forward spirits and the young; old haunts and customs are left with the lower class in the *café Maure*. The chief support of the general change, broadly speaking, is the instruction in French schools throughout the provinces, which reduces the old language to a country dialect and secures a certain glamour for the new régime and naturalizes it as a *patrie* familiar from childhood, protective, and opening the ways of life. A vital point is the extent to which, in this change of manners and ideals religion, the faith, is affected. It appears to be conceded that the practice of the faith formally is weakened. It is a faith in which the rite counts heavily; the doing of certain acts, as a matter of observance, is a large part of its reality; but a default in the practice of religion is never a sure index to a decline in belief. Belief habitually outlives practice. It is certain that no Christianizing takes place. The White Brothers, the Catholic missionaries of the Sahara, have long confined their efforts to works of humanity and simple helpfulness, abandoning attempts at conversion. If the religion of Islam grows feebler in its hold, it means that free thought, scepticism, and indifference come in its place. Perhaps the fundamental

fact is that the larger sphere which existed for religion in the old days no longer exists. The hermit is a holy man largely because he has nothing else to do except to be holy; and religion fills the world of Islam partly, at least, because of the absence of other elements in that primitive monotonous life. The modern world has brought with it into the desert a great variety of novel interests, a diversified life, stimulating curiosity and attention and often absorbing practical participation in the new movement on the part of the people in trade, enterprise, amusement, information, news. It appears to be agreed that in the parts of longest occupancy by the French there has been a relaxation of religious practice and a softening of fanatic hatred, concurrently with a corruption of morals and degeneracy of racial vigor where European contact has been most close.

The final question is of the issue. The population has greatly increased under French rule. The development of the country in a material way goes on apace. The colonial empire of France in Africa has a great commercial future. Will the native people in this new economic civilization be able to hold fast and secure for its own at least a share of the products of this great movement, or will they be merely a servile

race in the service of French proprietors and over-lords, or in a condition of economic serfage to vast accumulations of capital, analogous to that of industrial workers in our capitalistic society? Will the moral decay, incident to the change of civilizations, eat them up and destroy them, as has been the luck of half-barbaric peoples elsewhere in their contact with the modern world? In a word, is the Berber people, for that race is here the general stock and stamina, capable of assimilating this civilization and profiting by it? These are questions of a far future. Meanwhile the best opinion is sharply divided upon them. Historically, the Berber race has shown assimilative power racially by its absorption of the foreign bloods that have crossed it from the earliest days: the northern barbarians, the Arabs of the great invasion, the negroes of the south have all mingled with it freely; it has also shown power to take the impress of foreign institutions from Roman and Christian days to the time of its Islamization. Its resistant power, its vitality as a race, is scarcely less noticeable. There are some who look to see real assimilation, even to the extent of a miscegenation of the various strains of foreign blood; there are others who expect at most only a hegemony of civilization over a permanently inferior peo-

ple; and there are still others who hope for a true assimilation of material civilization, with its blessings of science and order, but see an impassable abyss between the old European and the soul of the desert, inscrutable, mysterious, alien, which remains immutable in the Berber race.

III

The old life of the desert is passing away; the fact is written on the landscape, on the faces of the people and in their hearts. It was as full of miseries as of grandeurs; and its disappearance is for good. What was admirable in it was the endurance of the human heart in the sterile places, and the mysterious flowering from it, amid this desolation, of a great faith. The death of a religion, no more than the decay of other institutions, should perplex or disturb; all these alike are the work of the soul, and when the soul leaves them they perish; and as in the revolutions the daily life of men goes on, so in the religious changes of organization and dogma the spiritual life of the soul continues. The soul can no more be without religion than the body without life. The sense of the mystery of its own being abides in the soul, in however half-conscious or imperfect forms, implanted in its

vital and animating principle, and shares with shaping power in its thoughts, emotions, and will, and exhales the atmosphere in which it realizes its spiritual life; it is here that religion, in the external sense of worship and dogma, has its source. The desert soul may cast the old life like a garment — faith and all; but under these old skies and in these supreme horizons it cannot change its nature, which is, in a sense, the human form of the desert. The flower of faith will grow here, and blossom in the wild, in the future as in the past, for the desert is a spiritual place; and in this austere and infinite air faith will continue to be a religion of the desert truly, with the least of the corporeal in its manifestation and idea, with the least of the defined in creed and localized in place; for the spiritual, the universal, the vague are the intuitions and language of the desert; there religion is less a thought than a feeling, less a prayer than a mood.

I closed my meditations in such thoughts as these, instinctively seeking, amid so much that was mortal, the undying, in the decadent the permanent, in the transitory the eternal.

IV

The stars were coming out in the sky; the coolness of the night was already in the air. The old Arab had long ago departed; the kif-smoking youth were gone. I was alone under the vine trellis, with the dark lines of the palm grove before me in the falling night. The proprietor, a mild-faced and gentle-mannered old Arab, came, as I rose to go, with a few pleasant words, and gave me a small branch of orange-flowers and a spray of the white flower of the palm. "*C'est le mâle*," he said with a smile. And as I rode home over the silent desert, and, crossing the bed of the oued, looked back on the mountain wall and swept with my gaze the great, dark waste under the stars, I found myself repeating his words — "*C'est le mâle.*"

DJERBA

VII

DJERBA

I

IT was a coast-line hardly raised above the sea. On that low horizon only a few rare palms silhouetted the far verge above the surf. The pale-blue flood of the sea, lifting measurelessly on and on in the shining levels of fair weather; the thin, white, uneasy line wrinkling down the league-long spits of sand; the slender jets of the tufted palms etching the vacant azure vague — there was nothing more, hour after hour. And "in the afternoon we came unto a land" — but that would be to anticipate. As a matter of fact, we did not come to any land at all. We hove to, some three or four miles out in the offing, and a few weather-wise boats bobbed about like corks on the rollers, with many a careening sweep hither and thither. I climbed down into one of them, and when I had recovered my balance found myself and my luggage in the possession of a Berber boatman and

his "sailor-lad"; but this was an entirely new edition of the sailor lad, bound in an earth-brown burnoose — an earnest-faced small boy, with an unfathomable seriousness, and devout in every motion, like a young acolyte, a fresh and unique incarnation of Cupid in bonds, naïve, with a sweet smile, eyes *très douce*, and such a mastery of his tasks in years still short of the glorious teens! What a hand he had for a rope! and how he got about with his clothes! The other was a life-worn man, *très triste* in the face and in motion. Father and son, and of the old race of the sea they were, a strange new type, and with I know not what added of life sadness, of dour reality.

We were soon under way, a leaning boat on broad-bosomed waters, and with that palm-set orange strip of sky to lead us on. I had not enjoyed for years such a glorious sail. Under a crisp west wind we rode the ridged waves with spurts of spray; the sun was sinking in the splendid reach and magnificent arch of that world of the void; and we drove through the purple-black sea furrows shot with dying lights. The steamer was already melting with the horizon behind. I seemed to have dropped out of the world, as if I had been marooned. I was free of it; it had all lapsed away; it had gone down.

The stretch of the sea was immense. The bracing wind was as heady as wine. "Fresh fields and pastures new," I bethought myself, looking to the low rim of land that hardly divided sea from sky, and wondered if I should find fields of the yellow lotus there. That margin was still distant, and I lay back in the stern half dreaming, enjoying the wet tingle of the spray on my face, as we made landward by long tacks, and the worn old man and the demure boy with their eyes on wind and wave sat silent. The boat grated against the pier. After a short walk I was in a small hotel, with a few rooms round an inner court, a veranda overlooking it from above, climbing roses, a pleasant French hostess, and no other guests.

It was the isle of Djerba. I had been drawn here because tradition places on the island the home of the lotus-eaters, of whom Ulysses long ago told a sea tale. This voyage was to be a hunting of the lotus. I have had an appetite for it since boyhood. It is my predestined food; but destiny has a remarkable way of escaping me. I have observed the fact on several occasions. No "branches of that enchanted stem" had met me on the pier, nor was there any "mild-eyed, melancholy" person about, whom the most fatuous could ever mistake for a

strayed reveller. Things often turn out in an unexpected way; but I had to admit there was an uncommon disparity between my youthful vision of the lotus land and what I saw. Where were the "three mountain-peaks," and the slender, high cascades of "downward smoke," and the "gleaming river," to say nothing of its Eden background? There was not a mountain anywhere in sight, not a hill, not a rise of ground. "A land of streams" — there was not a brook, let alone a river, not a single stream of any sort on the whole island, which had the appearance of a flat mainland. From the house-top I looked on an Arab town of no great extent, with a French core, scantily embowered with straggling trees, and the view was unbroken, landward or seaward, the horizon round. I suspect I shall find that mistily draped Tennysonian valley, with its long-drawn scene, in the Pyrenees some day, near a castle in Spain. It was not here. My French hostess had never heard of the lotus.

II

The next morning was bright and fair, and I went out to explore the land southward, a stretch of about twenty kilometres to the strait

which divides the island from the mainland. We were soon out of the town and almost at once in the fields. The road, extremely dry and sandy, wound over a very open country of scattered farms, with lines and groups of palm and olive, besides other trees, on slightly rolling, bosomy slopes with long and gradual variations of level. It was a pleasant scene in the warm April air of sleepy peace and solitary silence, unbroken country quiet. One characteristic of the land was soon evident. The population, which is upward of forty thousand for the whole island and is of the pure Berber stock for the most part, has never gathered into towns and villages. The few central points are mere market-places for distribution and supply; the people live scattered on farms in their own demesnes. There are singular farmsteads, built for defence, actually fortified; a wall, enclosing a space large enough for cattle and whatever must be under cover in case of attack, surrounds the whole, with towers at the four corners. These farmsteads are near enough for mutual aid; and with only this system of protection the inhabitants of the island withstood the random nomad forays from the mainland and the pirate descents from the sea for centuries.

The island is really the edge of the desert

where it makes down to the Mediterranean. It is, in effect, a farming oasis which has been reclaimed from the sands by its own people through the use of the underground waters. It is in a condition of varied cultivation throughout, but is more fertile in some parts than in others; for, if attention is relaxed, it reverts at once to the sterile, sandy state. A peculiar people inhabits it. They are dissident Mohammedans, and akin in their heresy to the Mzabites of the Sahara, whose *fantasia* I saw, and who have made the oases to the west and southwest of Tougourt centres of prosperity, besides being a vigorous nomad race of merchants through all North Africa. The sect would be called Unitarians among us, because they carry their insistence on "the only God" so far as to deny divine authority to the prophets, including Mohammed. They have strange bits of mosques, diminutive little things, with a square minaaret topped with a curious conical stone, and these are numerously scattered here over the whole island. They are also the Puritans of the Moslem world, strict in their manners, severe even, and very frugal. It is to this folk that the island owes its state of culture; they have created it as a habitable tract; nor do they confine their toil to the land. They weave ex-

cellent white burnooses of their wool, and bright, striped blankets, and mould pretty pottery; they engage in the fisheries; and with their nomad instincts they often seek occupation and trade abroad, like the Mzabites, who are credited with a Quaker-like prosperity in worldly affairs. This community, distributed broadly without towns in their own small domains, might seem a dream of the primitive — a frugal folk on a sterile land, in their rural Paradise of small economies and simple manners, leading uneventful lives of humble industry, far from the great world.

It was a curious country to look at — not rich, no bottom-lands, or waving acres, or luxury and exuberance of vegetation rushing forth; the nakedness of the land showed through. But the face of the country had lines of verdure and spots of spring-time and greening reaches over the dry acclivities; the mild warmth of the sun cheered everything to its brightest; there were plotted fields here and there, and the palms gave beauty to the sky and the olives gave character to the earth. There were some splendid olive-trees, old, hoary trunks, knobbed with age and contorted by ocean gales; massive columnar stems of incredible girth that lifted from near the ground immense rounds of heavy foli-

age impenetrably dark; and others, mere shells and ruins of time, that still shot green shoots from their tops to the bright wave of the sun. It was the scene of an old world; and there was something ancient and venerable to my eyes in the landscape that had seen so little change for centuries and yet had known human life, humble generations, for so long. Far away, beyond sloping breadths of dark, rough herbage whose sparse bunches hummocked the dry soil, glittered a low mass of white walls that slowly defined itself as a farmstead with orchards about; it had a rude, mediæval look in its exterior, and many offices, apparently, suggesting somewhat an old manor. Cattle stood round it lazily, and a couple of men were at work in the cluttered yard. On another ridge was one of those strange mosques, but larger and more important than usual, perhaps the memorial of some island saint. The blue sky shone through the window of the cupola of the minaret, with its conical stone at the top; on one side the olive-trees leaned away from it by twos and threes, and on the other high palms lifted their feathery tops, inclined at different angles, tall, slender, drooping stems with very small tufts. It was a very lonely and peaceful sight in that silent country, stretching far around. We met hardly

any one on the road except, in the vicinity of the rare houses, groups who evidently belonged on the place. The houses were not the least curious feature of the landscape. They were roofed with little domes, as is usual on the island. This gave a certain solemnity to the scene — the grave aspect of the East. So we went on in the calm, warm day, mile after mile, undulating over the country, but with no real change of level, with glimpses of the old farms, the sharp-pinnacled, square minarets of the solemn mosques, the white domes, feathery palms, and rolling olives, through the monotony of a land where there was truly a great peace.

We reached Ajim, the southernmost point of the island, in the light of a blazing noon that bit every line of black shadow with a brilliant edge. Ajim was only a short, tumble-down street. The one-story buildings of sun-dried mud on either side presented a low, blank wall, continuous and irregular, broken by a succession of high-arched or elongated oblong openings, closed by rough boards. I think I never saw so poor a hamlet. There was a general look of shabby dilapidation, but this was due to the original poverty of the materials and the humbleness of the effort. There was no appearance of abandonment. On the contrary, there was

building going on and the street was lively. I had much difficulty in keeping out of the way of donkeys and camels and porters, as I walked to the upper end and looked in at the *fondouk* which was thronged with beasts and men. It was a characteristic scene as I turned back, for the walk was only of three or four minutes. The little vista was dominated at the lower end by the rising buildings, and the poor street lay below, half in the sunlight, with its sharp band of inky shadow on the southern side. The people were scattered from end to end, mostly in earth-brown, flowing garments, with here and there a snowy burnoose of some more important citizen; and there were caps and turbans of all sorts, and a dash of faded blue or green now and then showed in the sunshine; but the scene was sober-hued, white and black and brown for the most part, under the dazzling blue in the fresh sea air. The open doors of the street, as I passed along, let a dim light into the interior gloom of what seemed places for storage, cavernous and dark; and further on there were a few shops and cafés, a smith, a rope-maker. There were all kinds of ropes; and it gradually came on me that this was really a fishing village and a place for sailormen, a port. It was a little unlike anything I had elsewhere seen. I went

through the rope-maker's shop; such places always call me with their savor of the sea and its tasks. I had a good lunch at a café; one can always get food in the most out-of-the-way places, if he has any knack for travelling. I remember only the cup of coffee at the end, with some of those strange-colored liquids, exotic drinks that one finds at the ends of the world, bright, tonic, exhilarating; and over one of these I sat watching the little life of the street, a continual passing of men and boys and burdens, with dialogues and incidents, and a not infrequent disposition to take the stranger into confidence with looks and nods and smiles of intelligence. It was a pleasant and picturesque hour in the foreign sun, and ended happily; and I strolled down to the pier, which lies at a little distance from the village beyond a broad, open ground.

It was a fine pier and made out very far into the shallow waters. The mainland lay a mile or two away and was as desert a strand as I ever looked on, flat, bleak, uninhabited. The level waters stretched far away on either hand, blue and shining, and a fresh breeze sent the lively waves to chafe angrily against the pier. The near scene was quietly interesting. Small vessels were anchored at a little distance, and

a hull seemed to be building or undergoing repairs near the shore, where there was a group with animals. Close to the pier leaned a tangle of slanting masts and ropes, the Arab fleet of sponge-fishers, not so numerous as the Greek fleet I had seen at Sfax, but similar in character and making a pretty marine view. Not far from it an Arab was sifting grain from a great heap by a moored vessel on the other side, and a camel was unloading. There were several walking figures on the pier, which was very long and narrow, and if one of them stood still he looked, in the strict folds of his Arab dress, like a statue on a bridge, relieved on the sky and the sea with perfectly defined lines. There was one group, however, that centred my attention — a true Bedouin scene. It was a family that had come over on some sort of a ferry from the other side. The man was unloading their belongings from the boat and piling them up on the pier, where a donkey was waiting to be loaded with them. On the heap sat two women, who looked like mother and daughter. The elder arrested the eye at once by her splendid physique and her dress. Her large figure sat in perfect repose on the coarse bagging, and she was clad with desert luxury. Heavy robes drooped voluminous folds about her, from which her dark-

skinned head and shoulders, deep golden brown, freely emerged. Her arms were bare, showing the deep armpits and half the full breasts; her hair was raven-black, the eyes large and solemn, the features prominent. She was covered with desert ornaments; silver rings hooped her ears, strings of beads hung over a wide brooch on her bosom, bracelets enclosed her arms; but what most fascinated my eyes was two immense silver crescents, almost moon-size, that hung by either breast. She was a splendid figure there under the open sky by the edge of the desert — a true mother of Ishmael. I shall never forget that unregarding pose — a type of the ages. They told me she was a rich Bedouin woman. I lingered awhile among the boats, and when I came away she was still sitting there immovable.

We drove back, as the afternoon wore on, by a somewhat different route, taking a branching and rougher road; but there was no real change in the scene. It was a sterile land, much mixed with sand, which the labor of man reclaimed with difficulty. The other side of the island is said to be more fertile, and rich in gardens. It was the same very open country all the way, and league after league we left it behind us, rare farms and lonely mosques and dreamy domes sparsely scattered over broad

areas of slightly broken land, wells, and little olive groves like apple orchards, fringes of palms on the dying orange sky, tracts of loose sand, speared over with tufted hummocks, until with the starlight we came back to the pleasant hotel with the inner courtyard and the climbing yellow roses.

III

I HAD never made a Jewish pilgrimage. The opportunities for one are rare, for the Jews are not a pilgrim people. There is on the island, however, a place which is described as a point of their pious journeying for centuries, and thither I repaired. It is the synagogue at Hara-Srira, a village of seven hundred inhabitants, which, with a neighboring and larger village, concentrates the Jewish population of the island in their segregated life. It was only a few kilometres away, and I reached it by a more settled and suburban road than that to Ajim. The little town was a picturesque sight, gathered none too closely about the synagogue, which was the principal building. The sexton and his son, grave persons in Arab costume, took charge of me with polite attention, and after the boy had assisted me to take off

my shoes I was ushered into the little temple. It was divided into a series of compartments, and although none of the rooms was large, the general effect was impressive. I was struck by the richness of the interior, and its look of cleanliness and finish, for my eyes had been long unaccustomed to such a scene; the bright tiles, the lights, the walls, all the furnishings seemed quite new and modern, European in fact, as if I had stepped back at once into the familiar world; there was nothing barren or austere, nothing to suggest the neighborhood of the desert and its ways. It was the shrine of an alien religion, and wore the aspect of civilization and a better-provided world, a different economic type, not that of the gray old mosques in lonely places on the sandy downs. The priest in his vestments, a slight, middle-aged man, a sacred if not a stately figure, came to welcome me, and pointing out various details led the way through the half-darkness of the subdued light to a small chapel-like room where were the treasures that I had come to see.

They were books of the old Law and ancient writings that had found an asylum in the sands. I was glad to be where the object of pilgrimage was a Book. These venerated copies of

sacred writings, more than libraries, symbolize to me the glory of letters; they are the founts of civilizations. I have seldom seen a more beautiful antique manuscript, or one so solemnly impressive, as the massive volume he showed me, their chief treasure, which, I think, he said dated from the eleventh century. It recalled lovely copies of the Koran that I have sometimes found in the mosques of the Levant. I wished he would read out of it to me, as the young *taleb* at Kairouan had read the Koran to me by the fading evening light in the dark-browed court of the Mosque of the Barber, nigh the little stone cells of the students, after I had seen, above, the banner-hung tomb of the companion of the Prophet in its solemn desert state; the lean Arab stood, holding the book in his hands, with his face lighted up, intoning the verses, and a few others listening reverently made the group. I shall never forget the music of that unknown tongue, like the sound of winds in the forest or waves on the shore. But I did not like to ask the priest to read. There were other manuscripts, perhaps a score in all, and I spent a half-hour over them. It was pleasant to be in touch with such things once more; for, excepting the wide volume that I saw the seated Jew reading in the street of

Tougourt, I did not remember having seen a book in the desert. The priest was proud of these treasures, and the boy also who stood by watching as I turned the leaves; scriptures and learning of long ago, that had survived in this remote niche, cared for and venerated like the gospels of some inaccessible Coptic monastery, they were worthy of a scholar's pilgrimage and respect.

As I came out into the open I noticed two lines of figures coming across country in opposite directions like people returning from church. They were Mohammedans and Jews, each walking from their respective cemeteries which lay not far away. I thought it was a typical and happy scene of two religions dwelling together in unity and peace. The general appearance of the people was much the same, humbly prosperous and contented, and they were dressed alike. The Jews here are completely Arabized, except in the point of their religion, and it was interesting to observe how much they had become assimilated to the soil. The women especially looked to me like Bedouin women, and I was obliged to scrutinize their features to detect their race; but no burnoose nor haik can disguise the superior vitality and intelligence of the Jews. On my return I stopped to stroll through the market, and there they were much

to be seen. It was an abundant market with the usual heaps and collections on the ground — grains, vegetables, utensils, and special quarters for wool, meat, and fish. It was a lively and thronged scene. An auction of donkeys and camels was going on in one place. My eyes were especially attracted by the piles of sheepskins and wool, and the men and boys lying lazily on them waiting for custom, their dark faces and bodies oddly relieved and picturesque on the wool. There were heaps of black sponges, too; and I noticed a curious white kilted costume which I had not seen on these shores, lending a new element to the crowd. Here, too, wandering about, I experienced the smallness of the world anew; for I fell in with some travelling merchants who had come to buy burnooses and blankets of Djerba, and who remembered me from Tunis; they were plainly pleased to find me in such a remote corner of their own country. I myself became sufficiently imbued with the spirit of the place to buy a few dates and figs, and more particularly some dried orange-blossoms, which were sold by the pound. I had never seen such a thing in Italy, and it gave me a lively idea of the orange gardens to the east of the island which were said to be so luxuriant.

As the day wore idly on, I explored the town, Houmt-Souk, for I believe I have not yet named it, which has fine, broad, curving streets and large, open places, a mosque with many domes and a high, square minaret, a tall artesian well, and a public garden where the French government experiments with plants and trees. The proprietor of my hotel was the gardener, and took me about and told me stories of his garden, but the spring was not far enough advanced for the soil to tell the same tale of its luxuriance and rarity. I had to content myself with seeing various shrubs and exotic trees. Then I wandered down to the beach, like all ocean beaches, with heavy, loose sand and a considerable tide, the broad view, sights of the sea, and a ruined Spanish fortress; but I went especially to see the spot where stood for centuries the great mound of Christian bones, Skull Fort they called it, which the pirate Dragut raised after the victory in which he broke the Spanish fleet in this offing, in 1560, taking five thousand prisoners and massacring the garrison. I suppose he massacred the prisoners, too; and here the ghastly memorial of his victory stood nigh the beach, till in recent years the bones were removed and buried in the Catholic cemetery. Before that, Norman raiders and Sicilians, when they harried all these coasts, had temporarily

held possession in the Middle Ages; and all over the island are Roman ruins, decayed causeways, baths, temples, the subsoil of all the Mediterranean world. But nothing now stands out in the historic memory of the old lotus land except Dragut's grim mound.

IV

I HAD not forgotten the hunting of the lotus, but it was now more clearly defined as a search for the *jujubier*, which is identified with the ancient plant. Persistent inquiry revealed the probability of a lonely specimen some five miles off in the country. We set off by a new route to the southeast, and away from the more travelled roads. The track was rough, and the horses toiled through heavy sands. The farm we were seeking was not on the road, and we left the carriage standing and tramped for about a mile or more across ploughed fields, little ditches, and stretches of white sand more than ankle-deep, till, asking our way of the rare people in the fields, we finally found the house we sought. It was a simple building of one story, with white walls about it, and the little dome at one end; a rustic garden of humble cottage flowers was before it, bright with spring blossoms, and here my guide introduced me to

the proprietor, a thin old man with a boyish figure, keen blue eyes, and great alacrity in his motions. He led me in through the courtyard, which was of considerable size, to the house, which consisted of one very large room, with smaller apartments at the further end under the dome. The room was a surprise to me; it was a marine room, all the walls being loosely covered with sailor objects. The old man had followed the sea all his life, and served many years in the French navy; now, with his pension, he had found his snug harbor in this remote peaceful island as a colonist. It was an ideal place for a sailor's retirement, with its flowers at the door, its profound country peace, and its relics of the sea. It had a Crusoe look, and so did the old man; and I gathered heart, thinking that here at least was a mariner, like the companions of Ulysses, who had found the port and elected to remain in the land. There were bones of fishes on the walls, implements from the South Sea islands, colored prints tacked all about, the curious things that sailors make, African oddities, a gun hung over the mantel, barbaric spears in corners; and the little collection was displayed and arranged with that neatness and order, almost pattern-like, which is a sailor instinct.

Yes, there was a *jujubier* in the neighborhood. The old man, who had an alert, breezy way about him and was full of vigor, seemed to wonder that I had come to see it, but said nothing; he was for the time more intent on rites of hospitality, and I went about examining the curiosities. His wife and a little girl came in with a great pitcher and tall glasses and set them down before us, and the old man poured out generous draughts of bright-brown cider. I smiled to think into what a vintage my dreamed-of juice of the "enchanted stem" had resolved itself — a glass of russet cider! But I took the blow of fortune, as I have taken others, and tried to find its soft side, which is a good rule. It was excellent cider, and I took a second tall tumbler. On inquiry I found it was not even of the fruit of Djerba, but brewed from a preparation made at Paris, somewhat as root beer is with us. Meanwhile we had tales of the sea and old adventures on "the climbing wave," pleasant talk, till I brought the conversation round to the *jujubier*. It bore a hard, brown fruit, I learned, sweetish, and a drink was made of it, like lemonade; and, yes, it had a sleepy effect. My hopes sprang up anew. No, it was not bottled. So, talking incidentally of many things, my host showed me the rest of the house, the little bed-

room with his photograph of other days, and with a last health we went out into the garden, where the little girl was waiting with a bunch of the spring flowers, and we walked off to see the *jujubier*.

It was at the end wall of a small, shut-up Arab house near by, against which it was trained. It was shoulder-high, and grew in stout, hardy stocks. The blithe old man told me it must be more than two hundred years old. I said it was very small for its age; but he added that its growth was very slow, almost imperceptible. It was just showing signs of leaving out; a naked, rough, shrub-like tree, with neither leaf, nor flower, nor fruit; but it was alive, and I still have hopes that in the case of a tree so long-lived I shall some time find it in its season, and eat of it, and perhaps drink its sleepy soul. I went back to the garden and said good-by to my kind and gentle host, and I was really almost as glad to have had this tranquil hospitality and Crusoe memory as if I had met with better luck in my search. I walked back over the rough fields content; and as we drove slowly through the sand in the wide prospect of scattered palm and olive, with the little white domes, quiet in the universal sun, I thought the lotus land was very good as it was.

V

The marvellous boy was waiting at the pier; the sail was set; the steamer, a distant film of gray smoke on the horizon, was sighted; and we cast off. It was a pleasant sail but without the romance of the landing. The boy, almost in my arms, sat steering the boat, and conversed with me with glances of his brown eyes; the sad-faced father amidships gazed vacantly over the sea. We laid a straight course, and it was too soon finished. The embarkation was easy. The old man gave me his benediction with humble eagerness and dignity, and the boy followed me aboard with my things. In the saloon he put his little hand in mine, then to his lips with head bowed, and touched his heart, looked up, smiled, and ran off. I went on deck in time to catch the last wave of his brown hand, and, leaning on the rail, watched them sailing homeward to the palm-set strip of pale orange sky on the long horizon rim.

TRIPOLI

VIII

TRIPOLI

I

ABSALOM ENGLAND, a tall grizzled Arab and sea-pilot, saluted me on the deck. The combination of names, race, and occupation might have seemed peculiar to me once, but I was proof against any African vagary. He was a land-pilot now, and took charge of me and mine. I did not lose my liberty, but I had unknowingly parted with all responsibility for myself; thereafter, except in consular guard or barred in my hotel, I was under his incessant watch and ward. I even began to have some value in my own eyes, seeing at what a price I was rated, and could easily have fancied myself a disguised soldan with an inseparable follower. He treated me as something between a son and a sheik. But at the moment, to my unforeseeing eyes, he was only a dark, respectful Arab, with a weather-worn and open-air look, black with many sum-

mers, a strong type of a fine race, and with a terrible cough that shook him.

We passed the Turkish officials and sank like a bubble in the variety and vivacity of the land, always so noticeable when one comes from the sea. It was pleasant to be in a city once more; there was noise and movement and things to look at; and almost at once the gray mass of a magnificent ruined arch, half buried in the street, lifted its dark and heavy stones, bossed with obliterated faces and grimy sculpture, among the paltry buildings; a grocery shop with its bright fruits and lettered boxes seemed to have nested like a swallow in its lower stories. It looked like a worn, old ocean rock in that incongruous tide of people and trade — once the proud arch of Marcus Aurelius. A few moments brought us to what elsewhere would have been an obscure hotel but was here the chief hostelry — a house with an interior court as usual, a few chambers opening on dilapidated galleries in a double tier, and rude stairs leading up. Seyd, a Fezzan negro boy, showed me to a tumbled room. It was an unpromising outlook even for a brief sojourn. I went at once to the French consul. The other powers have consuls, except that America at that time had none; but owing to the old

position of France as the protector of all Catholics, her representative is pre-eminent in the eyes of the Mohammedans — he is "the consul." The Consulate was a very fine old Arab house; a magnificent dragoman with negro guards received me in the great silent court and led me up the broad stone stairway to the large and beautiful rooms where I was to feel myself so pleasantly at home. Then Absalom and I fared forth.

I found myself in a true African street with a new trait. It is astonishing what originality crops out in the bare and simple things of this land; one thinks he has seen all, and by some slight shift of the lights something new emerges and is magically touched — the real and common made mysterious, the daily and usual made visionary, the familiar unfamiliar once more. It was a narrow street, vaulted from side to side, and its fresh atmosphere was bathed in that cool obscurity which in this land of fierce and burning rays is like balm to the eyes; and, besides, this street was painted blue, which was to add a caress to the softness of the light. This was the slight and magical touch. A stream of passers went down and up the centre of the blueness; the little shops on either side strung along their bright and curious mer-

chandise of the museum and the fair; and the shadowy, azure-toned perspectives framed each figure as it came near, with flowing robe or dark haik and burdens borne on head and shoulder. The place had an atmosphere all its own, that stays in the memory like perfume. I loved to loiter there afterward, but then we had a goal; and we came at last by flights of steps to the market on the great space near the sea. I had seen the people by the beach from the steamer and wondered at their number; and that was why I had come.

It was by far the greatest market I ever saw. It was truly metropolitan. I went among the plotted squares of merchandise and rows of goods spread out in great heaps and little piles, and along by the small tents islanding their foreign treasures. To tell and name it all would be to inventory a civilization: cloths and finery and trinkets; grains in sacks, amid which I wandered nibbling hard kernels of strange savors, trying unknown nuts and dried fruits; utensils, strange-cornered knives with curves of murder, straight, broad blades; slippers and caps; what seemed to me droves of cows — it was so long since I had seen cows — camels and donkeys; vegetables — bulbs, pods, and heads; things to eat, bobbing in pots and ket-

tles; leathers, hides, straws. It was an improvised exposition — everything that the desert hand produces or manufactures of the pastoral kind or that the desert heart has learned to desire of migratory commerce brought from far away. The grass market especially attracted me with its heaped-up bales of alfa, where camels were unloading the unwieldy and enormous burdens balanced across their backs; and so did the Soudanese corner, with odd straw-work, deep-colored gourds, and skin bottles.

But the stage was the least part of the scene; in this play the crowd was the thing. There were familiar traits, but in its wholeness it was a new crowd. I scanned them as an explorer looks at an unknown tribe from the hills. There was nothing here of Tunisian softness, mild affability and elegance, not the simple and peaceful countenances seen in the Zibans, nor the amiable cheer and brusque energy of the Kabyles, nor the blond beauty of the Chaouias, nor even the forbidding face of the Moor; here was a different temper — the spirit of the horde, the *fierté* of the desert, the rudeness of nature, borne with an independence of mien, a freedom of gait, unblenching eyes; true desert dwellers. I think I never felt the full meaning and flavor of the word, autochthonous,

before. They were the soil made man. There was also, beyond the tough fibre and wild grace of the free life, another impression, which owed perhaps as much to the feeling of the stranger there as to anything explicit in the crowd — a sense of something fierce and hard, an instinct of hostility, of disdain, the egotism of an alien faith master on its own fanatic soil.

This crowd, which fascinated me by its vitality and temper of life, was clad in every variety of burnoose and haik and head-gear; here and there was a crude outbreak of color, as if some one had spilt, and soiled, aniline dyes at random, but the general effect was sober — brown earth colors, mixed blacks and grays, dingy whites, a work-a-day world. There were many negroes. I had already added much to my knowledge of negro types, but here I annexed, as it were, new kingdoms of physiognomy. These men were strange as the tropics: some amazingly long-waisted, some Herculean in measure or extraordinarily lean and bulbous in the shoulders — new species of human heads. Arabs and Berbers, mingled with the mixed blood of half a continent, made the bulk; and here and there stood some richer personages, heavily robed, superbly turbaned, merchants from Ghadamès and from further off, where

the desert routes spread fanwise from the Soudan to Timbuctoo, opening on the whole breadth of equatorial Africa, Lake Tchad, and the Niger. For Tripoli has been for long centuries a sea-metropolis — it is now the last sea-metropolis — of the native desert world; hither still comes the raw wealth of Africa, with all the old train and concomitants of caravan, traders, and robber instincts; and here are most variously and numerously gathered the representatives of the untamed tribes. It is the last Mediterranean home of the predatory, migratory, old free desert life. This market, I knew, was the direct descendant of one of the world's oldest trading-posts, for the early Phœnician merchants established a commercial station here, as they coasted along exploring the unknown world; it was on this beach they landed, no doubt; that was long ago. This market was the child of that old trading-post. It was a wonderful scene there, under the crumbling walls in the blazing sun by the quiet sea.

Late in the afternoon I drove out into the oasis, which is a suburb on the southeast of the city. We were soon in the midst of it and passing along by the familiar scene of palm groves, with fruit trees and vegetables and silent roads. It was a more open country than usual, and

there was an abundance of gardens with houses in them; it had more the character of suburban villa life, a place of retirement from the city, than any oasis I had seen. The soil had much red in it, and this gave a strong ground-color over which the greens rose darkly on the blue. The tall wells — the *guerbas* — were a common feature in the gardens, for the oasis is watered in the old way by means of a pulley arrangement between two high standards over which runs a rope worked by a mule or camel or other beast of all work, which tramped to and fro beneath as the goatskin bucket rose and fell. I visited some of these gardens, picked oranges, and wandered about and talked with the laborers. We came out on the desert sharp as the line of a sea beach, cut by the palms; there was a fort or two on the edge, and the hard, barren waste swept away with the finality of an ocean toward the far distant mountain range southward. Two Turkish officers rode up from the route; they were fine figures, splendidly horsed, and looked very real. On the way back we saw many Turkish soldiers, sturdy, capable men, badly clothed but military in every way. I was more interested in the groups and solitary figures returning from the market to their homes, the Bedouins with sticks in

their hands or over their shoulders. How they walked! What an erectness in their heads! What an *élan* in their stride forward! Strangely enough, they reminded me of the virgins of the Erechtheum, the caryatides. I have never elsewhere seen such a pose. How like in color to earth, too, with their browns and grays on the strong tones of the roads they walked along! It was the clearness before twilight, and all the lines of the landscape were lowered and strong in the level rays; the palmy roads, the soldiers, the Bedouins made a picture fuller of life than one usually sees in an oasis. One felt the neighborhood of the city.

When I went out at night the streets were dark; lamps here and there gave a feeble light, stores were open, there were groups about. The cafés I dropped into were not full, unless small, and were all very quiet. There were long bubble pipes to be had, and silent Arabs smoking them; but I contented myself with coffee. It was not interesting, and I went to the Italian-Greek theatre. This was a small hall, but of considerable size, and full of Sicilians and Greeks. They were a hardy looking company, not to say rough. On the stage a girl was being tied to a tree by some Turks; it was a pantomime, and the plot went on and the daring rescue was ef-

fected to the satisfaction of the audience. While the stage was being prepared anew, there was the sound of a row at the door. Instantly on either side of me there was a movement and thrust of those hard faces and strong shoulders, like the lift of a dark wave at sea; it reminded me of a mass-play at football, in the old game, only it was bigger, darker, tense; it was fighting blood, always keyed for sudden alarm and instantly ready *en masse*. The little crowd, serried head over head, paused a moment, as an Arab came forward and made a short speech, explaining the trouble. The men fell back to their seats. The play was going on now — it was a variety performance — with two girls singing songs, and the rescued maiden of the pantomime came down to collect pennies. It was curious to see the changing expression on the faces of those men and boys. They had been hard faces, with Sicilian sombreness in repose, rugged with life, with something dark and gloomy in them; now they broke into smiles, their eyes shone and laughed, as she passed among them, they were glad to have her speak to them — it was sunshine breaking out over a rough and stormy sea. There was a dance now; and so the scenes went on till I came away and Absalom piloted me through the dark and deserted ways to the

hotel. It was closed of course, but I was not prepared for what followed. There was a great undoing of bars and turning of locks, and I stepped in over the body of a sleeping negro and waited till his companion did up the fastenings. They seemed to me sufficient for a fortress; and, not content with that, these two negroes slept all night on the floor next the door. It was like a mediæval guard room.

II

We were finishing our late nooning at the café which pleased me best near the little park with the old Roman statues by the sea, where the handful of resident Europeans liked to take the air at evening. I was engaged in my favorite occupation of regarding the street. The little room was crowded with natives seated close, quietly gaming or doing nothing; Turkish officers rolled by in carriages; there was continuous passing; a half-dozen *gamins* played in the street, the most eager-faced, the most lithe-motioned of boys, the most snapping-eyed Jewish bootblacks, quite beyond the nimble Biskris of Algiers reputed to be the kings of the profession in the Mediterranean; on the other side of the street a flower seller was, as always, bind-

ing up violets interminably in his lean hands. It was a pleasant scene; but I lazily consented when Absalom suggested that we drive out to the Jewish village. We crossed the street to the cab-stand. I am not good at bargaining, and I am impatient at the farce or tragedy, as the case may be, of a guide beating down a cabman; but my feelings toward Absalom were different. I frankly admired him as he stood in his plain dignity, perfectly motionless, with a long-stemmed rose at his lips, a beautiful half-blown dark bloom with the curves of a shell in its frail, firm petals; and when the figure had dropped deftly and almost noiselessly from fifteen francs to six, "it is just," said Absalom, and seated me in the carriage with the double harness.

We passed into the pleasant vistas of the oasis, rolling over the red roads with the tumbled earth walls and by the deep-retired houses and the orange gardens, and the air was full of the fresh balm of spring. It was a smiling, green, and blossoming world, and it was good to be alive. I knew it was just such a world that such villages are in, and this one was native to the oasis and partook of its qualities; but it seemed to take only the rudest and roughest of them and to carry them down. It was

a disheartening sight. I had never seen so wretched a Jewish village. The houses, the people were of the poorest; and not in an ordinary way. The village was a fantasy of poverty, a *diablerie*. The faces and forms, attitudes, occupations of the people, their mere aggregation, depressed me in a sinister way. Some of them were sharpening sickles on old bones; and others, women with earrings, were working at some primitive industry with their toes, using them as if they were fingers. The little place was thronged and busy as an ant-hill; but the signs of wretched life were everywhere, and most in the bodies of these poor creatures. I was glad to be again in the garden and grove of the roadside, and amid the wholesomeness of nature, as we drove off to the centre of the oasis.

There we found a great house, that seemed to be of some public nature, built on the top of a high, bare hill. It belonged to a pashaw, and its roof commanded the whole view of the oasis and its surroundings. It was somewhat like a rambling summer hotel in aspect. We were admitted as if there were nothing uncommon in our visit, and I mounted to the roof and saw the wide prospect — the white city and blue sea behind, the ring of the palmerai about, the gray desert beyond — and on coming down was taken

to a large and rather empty room with a balcony. There Absalom told me that the pashaw, who seemed to be the city governor, would be pleased if I would lend him my carriage, as he had an unexpected call to go to town. Shortly after the pashaw came in. It was evident that Absalom regarded him as a very great man. He shook hands with me, and was gravely courteous; but he understood very little French, and real conversation was out of the question. He ordered coffee, gave me cigarettes, and took me out on the balcony, pointing out the desert mountain range, Djebel-Ghariane, of which there was a fine view, and other features. We drank our coffee, and after perhaps twenty minutes of polite entertainment he took my card, shook hands in a friendly spirit, and bade me good-by with an *au revoir*. I sat alone looking out from the balcony toward those distant mountains over the great desert, smoking the cigarettes he had left me, and thinking of that vast hinterland of fanatic Islam before my eyes, so jealously guarded from exploration, where the fires of hatred against the Christian nations are systematically fed, while a victorious proselytism is sweeping through the central negro tribes, reclaiming them from fetich worship to "the only God." The carriage was not gone long. We

drove back at once, and I found the flower seller by the cab-stand still twining those endless bunches of violets, and jonquils and narcissi, in the sinking sun.

That evening we spent at the Turkish theatre. It was better furnished than the Sicilian. Palms decorated one side of the stage, and large flags draped the back. The centre was occupied by a group of three women of whom the one in the middle was plainly the *prima donna.* She was a striking figure, tall, and, in her dress, attitude, and expression, of the music-hall Cleopatra type. A high, gilt crown rested on her abundant black hair; her eyebrows were straight, the eyes liquid, roving, and full of fire, the mouth and other features large, the throat beautiful and firm; a white veil descended from the crown on either side, ornaments were on her arms and feet, she wore a flashing girdle, but the effect of her person was not dissipated in jewels or color; her figure remained statuesque, linear, and so much so that there seemed to me something almost hieratic in her pose, as she stood there, with the crown and the veil, motionless, the whole semi-barbaric form finely relieved on the broad stripe of the beautiful flag behind. This was when she was in repose; when she sang or danced the effect was quite different. I was not her only

admirer. There were a hundred or more men in the hall — no Europeans. They were smoking, talking, moving about in their seats freely, with an indolent café manner, and the performance went on with long waits. The lady of the stage was a favorite; men threw cigarettes to her and engaged her in conversation from the floor, and she would fling back a sentence to them. There was one admirer beyond all the rest. He sat in the centre near the stage, a splendidly appointed youth from Alexandria, garbed in the richest red, with a princely elegance and mien, a gallant; cigarettes were not for him — he stood up and threw kisses with both hands vociferously and numerously; he left no doubt as to his sentiments. Once or twice he attempted to rush the stage, but was restrained. He would go out, and come back loaded with flowers for ammunition. He had a negro rival off to the left, also finely apparelled, but no match in that regard for the Alexandrian red, though he held his own in the attention of both the audience and the queen of the stage. Meanwhile the numbers of the performance lazily succeeded one another; there was music on the zithern and mandolin, the tambour was heard — songs, dances, other girls. It was all perfectly blameless; and, indeed, in my judg-

ment, the Arabs have a stronger sense of public decorum than the northern barbarians at their play. I saw the entertainment out and went to my castle.

III

A DRIVE in the oasis was always worth having; the sky was the purest blue, it was brisk desert air in the nostrils, and notwithstanding my misadventure with the Jewish village I yielded to Absalom's programme and went to see how the negroes fared at their own rendezvous. It was a lesson to me not to prejudge even a trifling adventure in a new land. The sight was piquant. The village was a little collection of conical roofed huts with brush fences round each one; a few palms feathered the sky over it, and groves of them made the horizon lines, except where the sparkling sea stretched off beneath the bluff. The place was alive with women and children in striped burnooses and nondescript folds, whose rough edges and nutty colors seemed to belong to the complexions and stiff hair, of all varieties of turn, that one saw on every side. They were very poor people, of course, but their miserable state did not make so harsh an impression as in the case of the Jewish village;

there was a happy light in their faces and a fitness in the environment of hut and brush under the palms in the sun which made the scene a part of nature. It was a bit of equatorial Africa transplanted and set down here — a Soudanese village in its native aspect, even to that touch of grimace, as of human nature laughing at itself, which negroes have in their wild state. I had a flash of such an experience at Gabès; in the oasis, just below the beautiful sweep of the cascades, there suddenly sprang up before me in the bush a young negress, as wonderfully clad as unclad. It was as if a picture in my geography had come to life. I might have been in a jungle on the banks of the Niger. It was the same here; the degrees of latitude seemed to have got mixed; the scene belonged much further south under a tropic sky, and I lingered about it with interest and curiosity.

Then I turned to the market close by — not a great market like that of the city but the oasis market. It did not cover a large space, but was prettily situated, and banked at one side by a fine palm grove, which gave it character and country peace. There were two or three hundred people there, scattered among the usual squares of goods and vegetables, variegated with straw work, skin bottles, and Soudanese helmets;

but there was an uncommon number of animals — camels and cows, sheep and goats. There was slaughtering going on near the palm grove. It seemed that the purchaser picked out the particular sheep he preferred, and it was made mutton before his eyes. It reminded me of Greek Easter days. The scene, however, was by no means sanguinary; it was a country fair amid the quiet palms asleep in the blue — the life of the people in their own land in their ancestral ways.

IV

The consul had made me his friend by incessant kindness. He had at the start insisted on my taking my first meal in Tripoli with him, and since then I had lived almost as much at his table as at the hotel, which was a blessing, not to say a charity. He was a scholarly gentleman, long resident in the Levant, and familiar with the Moslem world, though his appointment to Tripoli was of recent date. It was to this last fact, perhaps, that I owed the rarest of my privileges, an invitation to visit the mosques in his company. Tripoli is a stronghold of fanaticism, and the mosques are jealously closed to the infidel; permission to visit them is seldom given,

and if formally granted is generally made nugatory in some underhand way; for a person in my unofficial station such a visit would be unexampled. The consul, however, had never himself seen them, and he suggested that this would be an opportunity for me. His application was at once honored, and the next morning the chief of police called and we set out at once, preceded by the consular *cavass* or dragoman, himself no mean figure corporeally, brilliant in his Algerian uniform and bearing before him the formidable and highly ornamented staff of his office.

We went first to the Gurgy Mosque, which is considered the finest of all. I wondered if the key would be lost, which is the usual subterfuge; but the guardian was quickly found, and turned the lock. My account of the mosques must be meagre; the occasion allowed of only a *coup d'œil*, it was impossible to take notes on the spot, and one could examine in detail only near objects in passing. I can give only an impression, not a description. All mosques are much alike in plan and arrangement. There is a plain, open hall with the great vacant floor-space for prayer, the ornamented mihrab or niche in the wall, showing the direction of Mecca toward which all turn, with brazen candlesticks

or hanging silver lamps, and by its side and at a little distance the high pulpit with a steep stairway for the preacher or leader; there may be also a closed box on the floor, or sometimes elevated, for the Sultan or his representative, and a latticed space for women. These are permanent features. The mosques differ much, however, in size, ornamentation, and aspect, and in the *entourage* of the main room, its approaches, courts, and dependencies. The interior of the Gurgy Mosque was square, finely decorated, beautifully wrought. Intersecting arches, resting on rows of columns, divided it into several naves with many domes. The walls were tiled, and an unusual look of elaborate finish was given to the general effect by the fact that all the surfaces were entirely covered, nothing being left bare; to the color tones of the tiles were added on all sides the lights of the highly wrought stucco incrustation, cool marbles, and the dark, rich contrasts of beautifully carved wood. The capitals of the columns, done in stucco, were each different. Texts of the Koran, illuminated in a fine script on a broad band at the base of the domes, gave another element to the decoration. It was a beautiful mosque, and I remember it as one of the few I have seen which were perfectly finished; there was noth-

ing ruinous or aged or bare about it, and it was completed — a lovely interior in which the simple elements of beauty employed in this art were admirably blended. We especially admired the carved woodwork here. Our stay, however, was but of a few moments' duration, and we saw only this interior.

We passed on to the Mosque of Dragut, the pirate, the same who built the mound of Christian skulls at Djerba by the seashore. It was quite different, a plain old mosque with old columns, and seemed to belong to old times. In a low chamber to one side was Dragut's tomb. It was covered with green cloth, and at the four corners colored banners hung over it; other tombs stood about it in the chapel, princes of Islam, and the usual maps of Mecca and the tomb of the Prophet were on the walls, and some cherished objects of historic or personal reverence were here and there; all about were the great candles and the turban-topped small columns of the dead. It was a place of profound peace. This impression was deepened still more as we passed out into the adjoining courts with their low, crypt-like columns, whitewashed, heavy, and sombre. Here the commissary, or chief, who had us in charge, an amiable-faced Turk with a gray, grizzled beard,

pointed out the tomb of the English captain, as it is known, a renegade lieutenant of Dragut, who sleeps in a beautiful niche nigh his old commander. Further on beneath an immense, broad old fig-tree in the court were other tombs, with the turbaned end-slabs of different styles and heights — a little company shut in this quiet close of death. A great silence and peacefulness reigned there, alike about the ancient fig-tree without and in the bannered chamber within. I could not help thinking what a place of repose the great pirate had found out for himself and his companions in his death. I went out touched more than commonly with that sense of deep calm which a mosque always, half-mysteriously, awakes in me.

Of the third mosque, which I did not identify, but suppose to have been that of Mahmat, we had barely a passing glimpse, looking down from a gallery upon a large carpeted floor — there were many carpets — but it seemed to offer nothing of special interest. The fourth, however, El-Nakr, the Mosque of the Camel, was after my own heart. It is the most ancient, as indeed one would expect from the name, that of Dragut being next in age, and has the special sanctity that attaches to a traditional religious spot. I suppose it was here that the faith be-

gan on the soil. We entered first into one of those low-columned, crypt-like courts; two tall palms were growing in it, with a little patch of bright-green barley beneath. The artistic effect of this simple scene of nature, framed in the seclusion of the gray old walls, with its bit of sky above, the sunshine and the unbroken peace, as it fell on my eyes, was indescribable; of a thousand scenes it imprinted itself on my memory as a thing seen once and seen forever — one of those pictures that are only painted by the soul for itself. We passed within. It was an old plain mosque, with low columns and an ancient look, all without elegance or ornament. It was in the same spirit as that of Dragut, but with still more of austerity and impressiveness. This was the stern old faith, which could dispense with all but God. It touched the Puritan sentiment in me to the quick. This was Islam in its spirituality. Here there was the solitary desert soul in its true devotion, that sought only room for God — the same room as on the desert sands or on mountain tops. There was nothing else in the mosque — only the barley under the palms by the crypt-like cloister, the low-columned austerity within. I felt the harmony of the two — they were different chords, but one music of the desert silence.

It was only when we came out from this sanctuary that I noticed any resentment among the people. As we walked down by the row of men standing about the entrance, scowling faces and fire-flashing eyes were bent on us on all sides, but there was no other demonstration, and we passed through the crowd in that silent glare of hate. It is a curious sensation to feel oneself an object of hatred to a crowd, and this was my first experience of it, though, of course, one notices the hostile look of individuals in Mohammedan countries. It was disagreeable; and I half blamed myself for having violated a prejudice which was perfectly natural for these men. We were out of the press in a few moments, and soon reached the last mosque that it was thought worth while to visit, that of Ahmed Pashaw. It was large, of the same decorated type as the first. There were the same old marble columns, the beautifully ornamented mihrab, the pulpit, the Sultan's box, a brown latticed gallery; bright mats lay on the floor, the blue and green tiles shone cool on the walls, moulded stucco and carved wood filled the spaces, there being one unusually fine ceiling in carved wood; and there were Koranic texts. The crescent was abundantly used in the decoration. It was all very beautiful and char-

acteristic, full of restful tones, of harmony and repose. As we passed toward an inner door leading to the cemetery of the mosque, we noticed inscriptions to the dead on the wall, and one was pointed out of a pious man who went straight to Paradise. Outside beyond the tall minaret were the tombs of the faithful who were buried here, with the turban-topped slabs as usual. The guardian, who seemed a very old man, with true Arab gentleness urged me repeatedly and cordially to climb the minaret, but I refrained, disliking to detain my companions. We passed out from this beautiful inner close into the street, and turned to the Consulate where we talked over our morning's walk.

It was no small part of my pleasure in Tripoli that I owed to my friend's hospitality, which gave me the graces and comfort of civilization in so rude a place as the ordinary traveller necessarily finds such a country. The boys of the oasis, in other parts of Africa, had given me the wine of the date-palm fresh from the tree; here I drank it a little fermented, an exotic drink piquing the curiosity, and was the more glad to renew my memory of a long-forgotten *rosso spumante* and to make altogether new acquaintance with pleasant wines of Touraine.

What conversations we had over these and on the quiet terrace by the garden, ranging through French African territory and the Levant, touching on Persian poets; and my host showed me many beautiful things. It is in this atmosphere of scholarly talk and friendly kindness that I remember the morning walk among the mosques of Tripoli.

V

The British consul, who had also shown me attention, arranged for me to visit the Turkish school of arts and crafts. Hassan Bey, who seemed to be an aid of the Vali, waited on us one morning at the Consulate, and we set out to walk to the school. Hassan Bey was an exile from Daghestan, of a fine military figure, middle-aged, thick-set, with a pleasant countenance; his gray whiskers became his energetic face; he had a look of power and the grave authority of character. He wore a sword; his sleeves and gold braid gave distinction to his person; and he carried lightly, like a cane, the short, twisted whip of stiff bull's hide that one occasionally sees on these coasts. I have seldom seen so manly a figure, rugged and strong, and stamped by nature for rule; and his polite-

ness was complete and charming, with an accent of strength and breeding that put it out of the category of mere grace of manners. He interested me profoundly by his personality, an entirely new type in my experience, and as the walk was somewhat long I had an opportunity to observe him.

The director of the school received us cordially, gave us coffee and cigarettes, and showed us through the buildings which were rather extensive. The school is endowed with some lands, and its income is supplemented by voluntary funds and a subsidy from the government. It receives upward of one hundred and fifty pupils, from the age of twelve years, and completely supports them during the course, which is seven years in length. Some literary instruction is given, such as geography and secondary branches; but the main end of the school is technical training in the arts and crafts. There was a carpet and silk-weaving department, a tailor-shop, a shoe-shop, carpentry, a foundry and blacksmithing, a refectory and store-rooms. The shops were rather empty, and the students whom I saw were few and of all ages; the rest may have been at their books. The foundry and the carpenter-shop were the busiest and most occupied; there were many heavy pieces

of machinery of modern make, and the department seemed properly provided for and in competent management; work was going on in both these rooms, which I watched with great interest. I was told that the furniture of the Ottoman Bank was made here, and apparently orders of various kinds, as, for example, for wheels, were regularly received.

The foundation clearly enough was only a beginning, and the provision inadequate to the scale; but it was a serious and admirable attempt to plant the mechanical arts in the country in their modern form and development, and to foster industry in the simple crafts. The idea was there and in operation, however the means to realize it might seem small in my American eyes, used to great industrial riches in such things; and I was much impressed, not only by the facts but by the spirit of the thing and those who had it in charge. The products seemed excellent, so far as I could judge of the various things shown me. I followed the example of the consul in buying a small bolt of strong silk in a beautiful design of brilliant-colored stripes, and I should have been glad to have taken more in other varieties. I was rather surprised when at the end Hassan Bey suggested my going into the girls' carpet school.

We entered, paused a moment at the schoolroom door that some notice might be given, and on going into the room I saw that all the girls, who were young, were standing with their faces turned to the wall. We remained only long enough to see the nature of the work and its arrangement, and for a word with the teacher; but the scene, with the young girlish profiles along the sides, was picturesque. There is one other carpet school for girls in another city. We spent perhaps two hours in this inspection and walked leisurely back to town, where I parted with Hassan Bey with sincere admiration.

In the afternoon I went with Absalom to visit a school I had heard of in the Jewish quarter, a pious foundation, the bequest of a wealthy Jew, for the education of poor boys. There were about five hundred of them there, bright-eyed, intelligent, intent, as Jewish boys in their condition usually are. The buildings were excellent, properly furnished, with the substantial and prosperous look of a well-administered educational enterprise. I visited several rooms, saw the boys at their desks and classes, heard some exercises, and talked with the professor in charge. I noticed a tennis-court on the ground. Altogether, I was more than favor-

ably impressed by what I saw, and the mere presence here of a well-organized charity school on such a scale was an encouraging sign. It was surprising to me to find this establishment and the technical school at Tripoli, where I had certainly not anticipated seeing anything of the sort, nor was this my only surprise. I had thought of Tripoli as a semi-barbarous country almost detached from civilization, a focus for Moslem fanaticism, a place for Turkish exiles, a last foothold of the slave-trader, and such it truly was; but it did not present the aspect of neglect and decay that I had imagined as concomitant with this. The old gates of the city had recently been removed; outside the walls there was a good deal of new building going on, which was a sign of safer and more settled life as well as of a kind of prosperity; the roads were excellent, and in a Turkish dependency that is noticeable; in some places new pavements had been laid. In other words, there was evidence of enterprise and public works, of modern life and vitality; and this impression was much strengthened by my experience of the two schools. It is true that I never lost the sense of that strangely conglomerate crowd that passed through the streets, that mixed and fanatic people. I indulged no

illusions with respect to the populace *en masse*. The state of things, however, seemed to me by no means so bad, with these stirrings of civilization, of betterment, of a modern spirit in the city, and I was frankly surprised by it.

My surprise melted away some months later when, on opening my morning paper in America to read of the Turkish revolution, I saw that the Vali of Tripoli was among the first of the exiles to sail for Constantinople; and I observed that, later, he had an active part in the government of the Young Turks. He and Hassan Bey had been doing in Tripoli what they had been exiled for wishing to do on the Bosphorus. Then I understood.

VI

It was night. Absalom and I were in the Arab quarter, on our way to see some Soudanese dancing. There were few passers in the deep-shadowed, silent, blind streets that grew darker and seemed more mysterious as we penetrated deeper into the district. We had gone a considerable distance. From time to time a man would meet us, and then another. We seemed to be going from precinct to precinct under some sort of escort. I noticed that Absalom had many

hesitations; once or twice he refused to go further, and there was something resembling an altercation; then he stopped decisively, and would not budge until some one whom he desired should come in person. We stood, a group of four or five, waiting in the obscure passageway for some ten minutes. At last the man came, a tall Arab, with a look of rude strength and superiority. He was the chief, and we walked on with him in that dark network of corners and alleys. I was beginning to think it a long distance, when we turned under a heavy gateway into a dark, open court, as large as a small city square, with houses round it like tenements. A kerosene lamp in a glass cage flared dimly on one side, and there were a few figures round the court; but the scene soon took on a livelier aspect.

The chief began collecting his men in the centre, and numbers of people emerged from the houses and sat on the edges near the walls of the houses. They were a rough-looking crowd, evidently very poor and badly clothed, and there were many that made a wild appearance squatting there in the darkness. Two policemen, attracted by the commotion, came in, and a street lamp was transferred into the court. There was now quite a gathering in the

centre, where a fire had been built by which three men were seated; some sort of incense was thrown into it, and a light smoke with a pungent odor began to be lightly diffused through the court. There must have been as many as seventy in the crowd round the fire, and at least a couple of hundred spectators crouched about the sides; it was more of an exhibition than I had expected, and from the corner where I sat with Absalom and two or three attendants the scene began to be weird. Then the drum beat in the middle; the men, all of whom had clappers, lifted them in the air, falling into line, and immediately one of those wild, savage chants shrilled forth, rising and rising to an acute cry and falling monotonously down, increasing in volume and mingling with the noise of the sharp clappers and the drum — an infernal din. The chant of the Aïssaouas, that I had heard in the desert, was "mellow music matched with this." And, from the first moment it never stopped; it was ear-piercing as it reverberated in the closed court, and at first it was confusing.

The dance began with a procession in double file round the fire, with the three men seated by the smoky flame. It was a slow walk timed to the rhythm of the voices and the clappers, gradually increasing in speed and becoming a

jump, with violent gesticulation, twisting, and long reaching of the arms and legs, while the human cry grew shriller and more vibrant and rapid in the emotional crisis of the excitement. Round and round they went, and from time to time the line would break into parts as the men turned to the centre just before me. There were three persons who seemed to be leaders: one, whom I named the Hadji because he answered to my idea of that word, another dervish-like, and a black man. The dervish interested me most. He was the head of his group, and as he came between me and the fire, standing well forward from his band and well in toward the fire, he would whirl, and then reverse, whirling in the opposite direction; and — he and the procession moving forward all the time — he would fall limply forward toward his men almost to the ground, recover, and fling himself backward, rising high with his clappers spread far over his head. It was a diabolical posture; and, as he stood so, his leaping followers bowed down to him, kneeling almost to the ground but not touching it, and flinging themselves erect far back with arms spread. I wondered how they kept their balance in that dancing prostration. Then the group would pass on, and the next come into play — the Hadji, the black man —

with the same ceremony, but without the whirling. Round and round they went interminably; the chant rose and fell, the march slackened and quickened, and every few moments there was this spasmodic rite of the salutation and prostration at the height of the dance.

The ring of spectators, crouched and huddled round the court, sat in the imperturbable silence and apathy of such audiences. The edges of the scene were an obscure mass of serried, half-seen forms under the house walls, filling the space rather closely; the smoke of the incense, with which the fire was fed, hung in the air, and Absalom said it was good for my eyes; the only light was the blaze of the flame upon the dark, moving forms in the middle, and the two street lamps over them, and the night-sky above. It was an unearthly scene, with those strange figures and heavy shadows; and the fearful din made it demonic. I do not know what the dance was, its name or origin; but it seemed to me to be devil worship, a relic of the old African forest, a rite of the primitive paganism and savage cults of the early world. The three dark men by the fire with the drum, the grotesque, fantastic ritual of the bowing and kneeling procession, the atmosphere of physical hysteria and muscular intoxication, the monotonous, shrill cry

in which the emotional excitement mounted — here were traits of the prehistoric horde, of a savagery still alive and vibrant in these dancing figures. It was as if I were assisting at a worship of the Evil One in a remote and barbarous past.

After a while I began to take notice of particular individuals in the dancing mass. I was specially attracted by three who seemed uncommonly strong and tireless and made a group by themselves. They were poorly but distinctively clad. One was in black, with loose arm-sleeves showing his bare skin to the breast; one was in white, with an over-haik of black divided down the back, which streamed out; the third, who was very tall and lank, one of the tallest figures there, was in blue, faded and worn; and, as they danced, of course the folds of these garments spread out on the air, showing their bare legs in free motion. Their heads were closely covered with white, except the mouth and eyes — not merely covered, but wrapped. I turned to Absalom, and said, "Touaregs." He looked at them, as I picked them out for him, and said, "*Sì, signor*," for he always spoke to me in Italian. I had wished much to see some Touaregs, and, though I had seen men with covered faces, I had never been quite sure. They are the finest race of the desert, first in all manly savage traits,

bandits of the sands, complete and natural robbers, fierce fanatics, death-dealers — the most feared of all the tribes. They cover their faces thus to protect them from the sand, for they are pure desert men. I smiled to think that at my first meeting with the terrible Touaregs I found three of them dancing for my amusement; but I looked at them with the keenest interest. They were certainly superb in muscular strength. At the end of an hour they showed no weariness; and there was a vigor in their motions, an elasticity and endurance that easily distinguished them from the others. I watched them long. They were perfectly tireless, and the dance called for constant violent muscular effort. I shall never forget that group, whose garb itself, thin and open, had a riding look, and especially the man in the blue garment, with long, gaunt arms and legs, who fell forward and rebounded with a spring of iron.

There were some changes in the method and order of the motions, but the dances for the most part were merely new arrangements of the same jumping and kneeling performance. I sat in the awful din of it for two hours, interested in many things, and rather pleased, I confess, at being alone in such a company. One gets nearer to them so in feeling; with a companion of the

same race, even though unknown, one stays with his race. I left the dance still in the full tide of vehemence and glory of uproar, overhung by the light pungent smoke and dissonance, with the obscurely crouching throng in the low shadows, and as we lost the sound of it in the deep silence of the dark lanes, where we met no one, I think the night of an Arab city never seemed so still. A man with a lantern went ahead to light the way which was black with darkness; Absalom and the headman went with me, and a negro followed behind. They attended me to the door of the hotel, and it was a striking night scene as I stood in the hallway, the negro guards roused from their straw mats looking on, and shook hands with the strong-faced, rough-garbed headman who had had me in his protection that night.

VII

I WENT out for a last drive with the British consul toward the oasis of Gergarish, which lies westward of the city, a new direction for me. He was familiar with the Mediterranean; and, the talk falling on the classical background of North Africa, I told him of my search for the lotus at Djerba. He avowed his belief that

much of the Greek mythic past had its local habitation on these coasts, and gave me a striking and quite unexpected instance. I had supposed that Lethe was an underground stream and approached only by the ghosts of the dead. He assured me that it was situated not very far from Benghazi, where he had been consul, and made an excellent table water. It is a large fountain or underground lake in a cave; he had been on it in a boat with a friend, and it was said that fumes from the water would oppress the passenger with drowsiness. I heard this with great interest, and like to remember that I can obtain a cup of Lethe, should I desire it, this side the infernal world. My friend added his belief that partial oblivion can be found comparatively widely diffused in North Africa, not being dependent on either Lethe or the lotus. This tradition of drowsiness which attaches to these coasts in old days is to be attributed to the quality of the air, which is soporific. Continued residence causes a loss of memory, not that one forgets his early days, home, and children, like the lotus-eaters, but one grows uncertain about recent events and the mind becomes hazy as to whether one has or has not done this or that; to such a degree is this true that my friend advised a return to the north at least once in two

years to allow the memory to recover its normal force. With such talk, which was quite seriously said, though it has its humorous side, and which faithfully reflects the African atmosphere, we whiled away the time, conversing, too, of the American excavations at Benghazi and the bells of Derna that rang the Italian priest to his death — for the Arabs dislike bells — and the thousand and one topics on which a traveller is always prepared to receive information. I had been so long alone that those talks at Tripoli were almost as much of a rarity as the scenes; they are an essential part of my memory of the voyage.

Our destination was not the oasis, but some caverns on a height above it. The day was brilliant and a noble desert view stretched round us from the eminence. The blue sea sparkled not far away, an horizon-stripe up and down the coast as far as one could see; the splendid dark green mass of the oasis lay just below us in the valley, and between us and it the desert plain undulated with the long slopes of a rolling prairie, spotted with cattle and a few Arab groups; inland the sands swept on to the line of mountains low on the far horizon. The mass of rock above us was picturesque and solitary. The gem of the view, however, was Tripoli east-

ward. It was the first time I had truly seen the city from outside — just such a Moslem city as one dreams of, a white city, small and beautiful, snowy pure in the liquid air. I was surprised at its beauty. We explored the cave. It was of a sort of stratified pumice stone and partly filled up with sand. It had been at some time a troglodyte dwelling, and chambers had been hollowed in it. There are many troglodytes, or cave-dwellers, still living in this primitive manner in rock-hewn chambers in North Africa. There are villages of them in the mountains back of Biskra, and especially in the southeastern corner of Tunisia opposite Djerba, and they are found in the low range of the Djebel-Ghariane that I was looking on in the distance. This cavern that we were exploring was one of their prehistoric haunts, a natural fortress and place of refuge for a small group of families in the wild waste.

The drive back was uncommonly beautiful, very African in color, and increasing in atmospheric charm as we neared the city in the clarity of the sunset light. The coast view was especially lovely. The blue sea made the offing, along which a line of scattered palms, continuous but thin enough to give its full value to each dark green tuft in the blue air, and to many

a single columnar stem beneath, ran like a screen, not too far from the roadway; and the strong foreground was that red-brown earth with the sunset light beginning on it. The beautiful white city lay ahead of us. The quality of the atmosphere was remarkable. The trees were very light, and seemed to float in the sky, like goldfish in a globe; and as the sunset grew, the diffused rose through the palms on the other side seemed almost a new sky. It was my last evening in Tripoli.

VIII

I HAD loitered for the last time in the street of the blueness and lingered in the souks of the Djerba merchants and especially in the little shop of a mild-mannered Soudanese dealer where I gathered up the curious objects that had been slowly collecting there for me to serve as mementos — things of gourd and hide, of skin and straw, a few ostrich plumes. I had photographed the baker's shop, and stopped at the intersection of the four corners to look once more at the ever-passing figures of the inscrutable and conglomerate crowd, the float of the desert life. I had called on my friend and kind adviser at the French Consulate, and my British host,

to both of whom I owed so much of the pleasure and variety of my traveller's sojourn. In one respect it was unique in my wanderings. I had never seen so many strata of culture, so many diverse kinds and stages of human life, in one place. I had had a last talk with Seyd, the boy from Fezzan, and with the negro guards of the gate and the boys at the door who were eager rivals for my morning favors. Now it was over, and I stood on the deck with Absalom. I was sorry to part with him. What a faithful watch he had kept! No matter at what hour I stepped out into the street, he was there, seated by the wall; wherever I left my consular friends, in some mysterious way he was instantly there in the street at my side. He had tempted me to a longer stay with lures of hunting in the desert where he calmly explained he would watch with a gun while I slept, and then I would watch, though there would be two others with us, but it would be better if one or the other of us were always awake, for one did not know what might be in the desert; and he had planned a voyage to Lebda, the city of Septimius Severus — it might be a rough voyage in a boat none too good, but was not he a pilot? He had brought me one day all his pilot papers; there were hundreds of them, each with the name of the craft and

the signature of the captain whose ways he had safely guided on this dangerous coast in the years gone by. But my voyage in North Africa was finished; it was done; the much that I had left unseen, and I realized how much that was — for wherever one goes, new horizons are always rising with their magical drawing of the unknown — all that was for "another time." So, knowing the end had come, he took both my hands in both his for our warm addio, bent his head, and went slowly down the ship's side.

I watched the scene as we drew away. The central mass of the fort stood in shadow, and the sunset light streamed over the eastern side of the city, the beach and bluffs; slender minarets islanded the sky; the blue crescent of the bay lay broad beneath; the oasis rose over the banked earth, and stretched inland, and the high horizon line was plumed with tall single palms tufting the long sky. I watched it long, till the beautiful city in the fair evening light lessened and narrowed to a gleam, and at the end it was like the white crest of a wave that sank and was seen no more.

IX

I WENT on deck. It was a May night with a fresh, cold wind. There was a bright star over the crescent moon which hung well down the west, and all the heavens were bright, but not too bright. I leaned on the rounds of a rope ladder of the rigging by the ship's side aft, and was alone; it was cold, and the passengers were few. I noticed on the horizon a dark shadow half-risen from the waters and mounting toward the moon; it rose rapidly, and grew black as it neared the light above. It was like a high arch, or cascade of gloom, broadening its skirts as it fell on the horizon. The moon was its apex, and seemed about to enter it. The scene was fantastic in the extreme, unearthly, a scene of Poe's imagination; the moon hung as if at the entrance of an unknown region into which it was about to descend. But there was no further change. The moon crested the arch; the single star burned brilliantly directly above and between the horns of the crescent and at some distance aloft. I watched the strange spectacle; the moon and the broad-skirted curtain of black gloom, pouring from it on the waters just in the line of its bright track over

the sea, sank slowly down together. The moon reddened as it neared the horizon line, and when the crescent at last rested on the sea, and the shadow had been wholly absorbed in the moon's track, there was another Poesque effect; the horned moon was like a ship of flame — not a ship on fire, but a ship of flame — sailing on the horizon. That picture, though it could have been but for a few moments, seemed to last long, and sank dying in a red glow slowly. I remember recalling the lines:

> "The moon of Mahomet
> Arose, and it shall set."

What followed was so singular that it may be best to record it in nearly the exact words of my rough notes, made early the next morning off Malta:

"The strange thing was that the star, still somewhat high in the west, growing brighter, took the track of the moon. I mean the moon's path of light on the water became the star's path, as plain but whiter; one passed and the other was there imperceptibly; one became the other. It reminded me of one faith changing into another, from a higher heavenly source. I stayed because the star was so beautiful — the most beautiful star I ever saw, except

perhaps the star off Cyprus. It grew larger and more radiant, with many, many points, and became a bunch, as it were, of jackstraw rays, one crossing another, all straight; and then, as I looked, a strange thing happened.

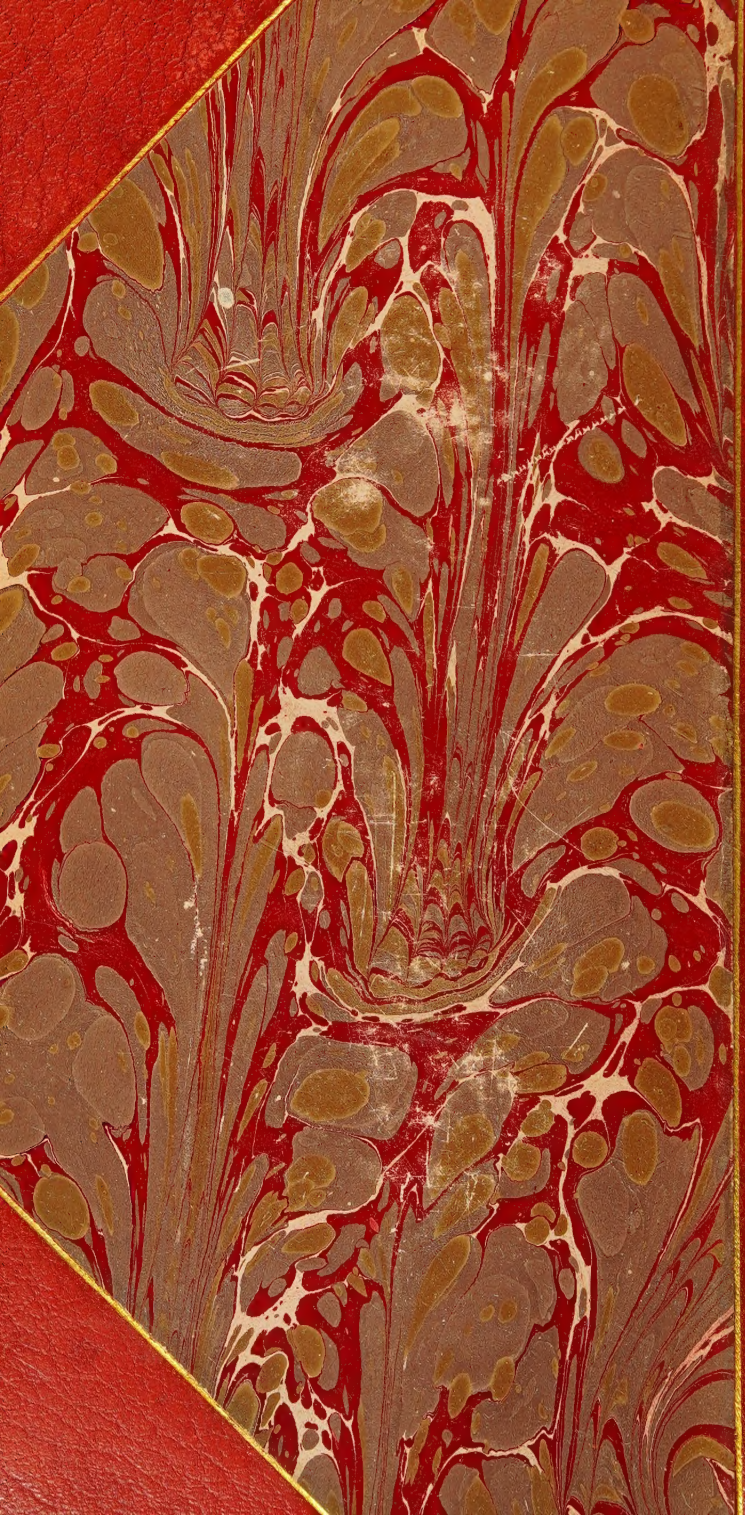
"I saw what might have been spirits in the star, as in a picture. The star lost shape, and became only the setting of these forms of light, perfect human figures. At first there were two, one older and one younger, like an angel with Tobias or Virgin with the young St. John; then there were many others, not at the same time, but successively. Some were constantly repeated; the Byzantine throned figure hieratic, the high-winged angel tall, the young angel seated and writing, the standing figure, prophetic, blessing, with high hands. There were scenes as well as figures: desert scenes as of Arabs — effects of the white and dark, like turbaned and robed figures together; the Magian scene; mixed moving groups, sometimes turned away from me. The figures often moved with regard to each other, and trembled on my own eye singly. When the star approached the horizon, there were figures that seemed to walk toward me on the sea, all white and radiant — single figures always. There were in all three sorts: Byzantine, with the crown or canopy above, and

the throne; Italian groups and lines; and Moslem. There was nothing distinctively Greek except seated figures.

"This continued till the star set, perhaps an hour. I would look off from the star to the other stars and to the sea; but as soon as my eyes went back to the star, there were the changing figures still to be seen. One did not see the star, but the figures; not framed in a star or in a round orb, but on a shapeless background; one saw only figures of light as if 'the heavens were opened.' And when the star set and was gone, another planet above, also very bright, as I looked, opened in the same way, with similar figures. There I saw a form with Michel-Angelo-like limbs, seated on the orb with loose posture, like the spirit of the star, and then a tall, throned figure with the crown over it. I did not at any time see any features — only forms, very distinct in limbs and modelling of figure, but too distant for features. It was an hour or more, and I still saw them in the new star when I turned away to go below. My eyes were tired. I was not at all excited — quite steady, and observing and experimenting; for I had never known anything similar to this. The visions were constant, without any interval, though changing. It was like

looking into a room through a window, or out of a room upon a landscape.

"It was wonderfully *spiritual* and beautiful. The figures were all noble and beautiful, especially in line, and occupied with something, like living forms. They were *white*, but not with white clothing, except the Moslem figures, sometimes; but white as of some *substance of light* — the faces sometimes dark, and there were shadows marking relations of the figures, but not shadows thrown by the figures. I made no effort to shape them; they came; they were of themselves.

"I thought this was what Blake saw; what the shepherds saw; what all orientals saw when the heavens were 'opened' — what Jacob saw, perhaps. What struck me was that the star was no longer a star, but shapeless, and only *a means of seeing*. It was a most remarkable experience."

Africa was always a land of magic; and it seemed to me that night as if the spirit of the land were bidding me, who had so loved it, farewell.